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SHARON FRANCIS ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW II

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Signed by Sharon Francis on September 5, 1980

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ACCESSION NUMBER 81-69

INTERVIEW II

DATE: June 4, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: SHARON FRANCIS

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE McSWEENEY

PLACE: Suite 340, Mills Building, 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue, N. W.,
Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

M: This is our second session together with Mrs. Sharon Francis, former staff assistant to Mrs. Johnson for beautification. Mrs. Francis, in our last session we had been discussing the two areas of Mrs. Johnson's beautification program--the development of plans and programs for a more beautiful capitol and the national aspects of the beautification program, which of course led to the passage of the Highway Beautification Bill, and Mrs. Johnson's traveling to publicize the efforts of cities and states in the beautification projects. We had reached a point in time, I believe May, 1967, when the District had finally made application to HUD for funding of the District project on inner blocks. I'd like to continue from where we stopped at that point up until, of course, the end of the administration. If there are any areas that I have further questions on, I'll bring them out as we go along or I'll bring them up at the end. Would you like to continue from the point where we were?

F: Yes. Now, I'm following through the journal notes that I kept intermittently at the time I was at the White House. One always wishes in retrospect that one had been really thorough, but there was hardly time to do that, only to toss the highlights down every now and then when there was a free moment to do so. I do recall in mid-June of 1967, which in time was about where we left off in the last interview, that the Park Service had Larry Halprin working on the plans for Anacostia Park. One of the first things he said was that the burning and filling which was taking place at the Kenilworth garbage dump site ought to be stopped. Well, it was very obvious to a great many people in the community that it ought to be stopped because of the fire hazard and, most grievously, air pollution. He also said it ought to be stopped because the fill was being pushed out into the river area and that the shape of that fill ought to be determined by plan, not just by the ad hoc movement of the Sanitation Department bulldozers.

In mid-June in a meeting with the Park Service, they quite enthusiastically agreed that they would go to the city government with a formal request that the burning be stopped. I don't have the dates at this point, but it is my recollection

that after they had made their request, but during the two or three weeks that it took the request to be processed, a little girl who lived in the Kenilworth Courts public housing development was playing near the burning area and was caught in the flames and burned to death. Of course, this touched the conscience of the community most deeply. Instantaneously the Mayor ordered a stop to the burning, which within a few days would have been stopped anyway. It seemed like a terrible note and a terrible ending, but we were glad we had the machinery in motion for starting a sanitary land fill on the same site.

Now I would like to talk about a couple of national matters which were occurring at about this time. Some time, I believe in April, I received a phone call from Martin Litton, the travel editor of Sunset magazine, and himself an extremely ardent conservationist and member of the board of Directors of the Sierra Club. He represented the most idealistic faction of the club in terms of preserving large tracts of unspoiled land in park and wilderness areas. He said that he and a number of California supporters of the Redwood National Park were in great despair over the legislative movement which was then taking place to demarcate a much smaller national park than its original supporters and sponsors had wanted. He said, "Only Mrs. Johnson can save us, and I have been delegated to call you and plead with her to come out. People are badly demoralized out here, and if she could only see the redwoods she would understand the difference between the larger area we are advocating and the much smaller area that many members of Congress are now beginning to support."

I explained that it was not really possible for her to plan a trip at that particular juncture. I was sure she was sympathetic and would like to know more and was certainly in principle a great supporter of the park, and as substantial a park as could be obtained realistically from the Congress. Then he changed, and he said, "Well, if she can't come out, would you come out and give her an eyewitness report?" I said I'd think it over and discuss it, which I then did with her and with Liz, with Sam Hughes of the Bureau of the Budget and with Ed Crafts, director of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. The latter two gentlemen had been carrying on the basic negotiations for the redwood park with the lumber companies and these negotiations were in a delicate state at that point.

They agreed that probably the park's supporters needed to have their morale boosted, and that such a trip on my part would be advantageous. Potentially it could be dangerous in terms of alienating the lumber companies, who were by definition hard-squeezed by any national park proposal, even though they were at this point resigned to it. Well, after about a week of discussing whether to go or whether not to go, it was decided that I should go, and did for two or three days up in the Park area. I traveled with representatives

from the San Francisco office of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and the National Park Service, and with someone from the Sierra Club, someone from Save the Redwoods League, and several people from the lumber companies in the area. I talked to Secretary Udall before I went and told him that I was going to go, and he said he would very much appreciate a frank report on my observations when I got back. He himself had not been out to the area and interrogated every eyewitness he possibly could to broaden his own understanding.

My observations were severalfold. One was that conservationists like to picture lumbermen as ogres of some Blue Meany type. The lumber company representatives that I was with at the time were not only outstanding individuals of superior interest and background, but also as courteous and accommodating and pleasant to be with as people ever could be. Of course, the same was true for the conservationists, and I think among the little leadership group that was on this trip both sides gained a better understanding of each other. That was highly to the good.

I also was very impressed with how few redwoods overall are left in Northern California and was tempted to feel that every one still standing ought to be preserved in a national park, because future generations will judge the Johnson Administration by the size and integrity of the park we leave. Everything up to its edges will be lumbered and cut down. Redwood lumbering is a hideous, chaotic thing to behold, even ten or twenty years after it's taken place the ground and vegetation are fiendishly ugly. Of course, it isn't realistic and was financially unfeasible to preserve all the trees that were left. But any size park would certainly have hideous clear-cut areas within sight of the roads and overlooks visitors experience in the park. Of the two areas--generally a northern area being the smaller one and an area centered around Redwood Creek being a larger one--being debated by proponents and opponents of the legislation, it was obvious to me that if the larger unit could be afforded it offered a better ecological whole. The area to the north was largely protected in state park anyway, where the area to the south if it could be afforded would add more to protected status, more redwood trees.

When I came back I made these observations, not only to Secretary Udall but also to Ed Crafts and to Sam Hughes of the Bureau of the Budget. The decision overall on the part of the administration was a financial decision. I certainly know my trip helped tip the scales toward spending more and getting more for our money, which eventually we did, and we had very, very strong support and leadership at that pole from Senator Jackson and the Senate Committee on Internal and Insular Affairs. I didn't try to press the Bureau of the Budget, other than to give my forthright observations, knowing that the financial

decision was one that had to be made with many other priorities in mind as well. But Sam Hughes kept in close touch with me afterwards as the negotiations went back and forth with the Hill. We ended up with a much better park than the administration was advocating at the time I went out. Mrs. Johnson kept in close touch with these matters as well. Again, she didn't try to touch the purse or pocketbook, but it was certainly known and felt throughout the administration that she was supporting as much as we could do.

Now, at the end of June there was a joint meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Recreation and Natural Beauty and the President's Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty. At this point, I'm sorry to say, I don't remember how much I've said about the President's Council before, so forgive me if I repeat myself. We can delete it later.

M: That's all right.

F: The President's Council is the cabinet-level Council with a rotating chairmanship. Secretary Trowbridge was chairman at this particular time. While it was established to resolve interagency difficulties and disputes and to give strong leadership and coordination to natural beauty and outdoor recreation matters, as a matter of fact it was a fairly weak and only slightly effective instrument. The times it was effective were when the Citizens' Committee, Laurance Rockefeller's committee, undertook their own investigations, made recommendations to the Council, and then the Council had a bone to chew on, something to respond to. It of itself, I fear, would have been a perfect example of status quo bureaucracy, or at best dealt with minor procedural matters, had not the Citizens Committee in its very well thought out and very admirable recommendations heaved the Council into action every now and then.

But it's a bit of a sad commentary on the difficulty of governmental coordination, and it's the kind of thing that has me just sitting here tapping my fingers and smiling, watching the new administration set up their Council on Environmental Quality. Because they're going to run into the same forces of status-quoism without a strong constituency impetus.

I attended that morning the Citizens' Committee meeting in which they'd gone through the recommendations that they were developing at this particular time. Then in the afternoon Laurance Rockefeller presented the recommendations to the Council. Very few cabinet people or agency heads were actually there. Lee White came from the Federal Power Commission. He was excellent, right on the ball and constructive. Most of the cabinet members sent their second or third string people, which indicated what they thought of the proceedings. Liz Carpenter came to the joint meeting and gave a rousing pep

talk, said something fresh and new which one doesn't often hear in sessions like that. One of the things she suggested was that they ought to get more women, because they have more time to work on advisory committees, and they ought to focus on problems that can be solved quickly by the citizenry at large. Things like landscaping the town square; thousands of towns have town squares, and something constructive and visible can be done by local citizenry. We don't all have to expect to be able to solve the Vietnam War, because none of us really can just by sitting and brooding about it, she said. Anyway, she had a rousing ovation from everyone in the room.

Oh my! In early July Liz and I had an amusing session. A public relations gal named Rosemary Storrer of Pepsi Cola came down to show us their multimillion dollar response to Joan Crawford's desire to have Pepsi do something serious about anti-litter. Parenthetically, I really have to say that the serious thing any container company can do about anti-litter is to redeem their containers, but that's a particular forest they don't want to look at or admit. So what they spawned in this instance was very lush, very expensive litter kits to be sent to some five or six hundred bottlers around the country. Presumably these bottlers would make speeches in their communities or do something with these litter kits. I don't quite know. I hope they didn't turn into litter. Just to show you the absurdity of what it was, with all the best intentions in the world public relations gone awry without any substantive direction, the little litter bag they enclosed in the kit was too small for a six-pack. Well, anyway, we tried to be polite and very grateful that Pepsi Cola was doing this. But afterwards we held our heads.

We also heard some wonderful news the same day, and that was Mrs. Lasker talked to Liz and said she was going to give some two hundred and fifty thousand dollars worth of daffodils for Columbia Island, nearly a million daffodils, also for dogwood trees that would bloom beautifully in April in the springtime.

M: Mrs. Francis, in June of 1967 didn't Mrs. Johnson have a new England visit or trip, I think through the New England area? Did you participate in that?

F: No, I didn't participate in that trip at all. Cynthia Wilson from the beautification office did go on it.

M: All right.

F: I had my hands fairly well full with things we were doing in the city at that time. Here on the eleventh of July I have a note of one of the many, many, many times Mrs. Johnson hopped in the car with one of us with her and went around the city looking at some of the projects she had done. She wanted to take a donor out

later in the afternoon and show him some of the things that had happened, so we did a little rehearsal. We went by Syphax School and saw that some of the trees that had been planted there apparently hadn't been watered or had been poor nursery stock because they were dying, and she felt very badly about it. Later in the afternoon I got on the phone to the Superintendent of Schools. He was pretty upset too, and said something was going to be done about it.

Then we went by Buchanan Plaza where construction was underway, and Mrs. Johnson rolled down the window and talked to Dick Andrews, who was superintending the construction. He had been someone who had worked for Walter Washington at the Housing Authority. Dick told Mrs. Johnson that he just had no heart to stay with the Housing Authority after Walter left, so he still wanted to do something for beautification and went to work on the Buchanan job. She was just as sweet as could be to him. Of course, he was enormously proud that she spent time talking with him. Then, as we were driving on, she commented how much better the Park Service is at maintenance of projects than either the schools or Housing or Recreation Department, and that if she were a donor the ability to maintain a landscaping project would be very much in her mind. She'd want to know how good the maintenance was.

We drove past Walt Whitman Park on our way back, and this is the area next to Rawlins Park, between the Civil Service Building and the General Contractors Building. Nash had been trying with very little receptivity on the other end to get these enormously affluent contractors of America to really make some significant donations so a park could be done there. After a lot of ballyhooing on their part, they coughed a very few thousand dollars. It shows how much they really wanted to participate and contribute. Anyway, Mrs. Johnson looked at it, and she said, "There it is, naked as a jaybird!"

We drove by the Mall on this trip. I asked Mrs. Johnson what she thought of the Hirshhorn Museum, because she and I had gone over and looked at the round plan, and her comments were interesting. She said that Bunshaft, who designed the Hirshhorn, was also working on the Johnson Library in Austin. Then she went on about how she adored that great sweeping museum in Mexico City, that this to her was just a revelation about modern architecture, although as a rule she didn't care for modern architecture. She didn't say anything about the Hirshhorn, which led me to conclude that she didn't feel she could compliment it, and personally I didn't blame her. I agreed.

She then went on with her enormous concern about the sculpture garden over by the National Gallery on the other side of the Mall. The way Bunshaft is designing it now in a very rigid, rectilinear form, is going to take out a huge old wonderful copper beech tree. It was Mrs. Johnson's feeling that that great old

copper beech tree that had lasted so many years was an important part of the Mall, and apparently she'd asked Bunshaft if it might not be possible to design the sculpture garden around the tree rather than eliminating it. I think that shows the degree of detailed attention she paid to many of the plans that were going on and also, in my own opinion, the great soundness of her advice.

M: What happened to the tree?

F: I don't know the status of the plan at the moment. The tree's still up.

The twenty-third of August Liz and I met upstairs in the Queen's Sitting Room with Mrs. Johnson and John O'Leary, head of the Yale College Political Union. He was extending an invitation to Mrs. Johnson to come up and speak on the Yale campus. She was really cute. She looked at him and started off by saying, "I'm afraid of you." He tried to assure her that Yale men were really gentlemen, and she said, "No, no, not that. But, you know, I'm really not a speaker. It's a hard thing for me to do. I only do it because I enjoy people and because I believe in some things and I believe in sharing them. But it takes lots of work on my part, and it's hard. Nor am I a professional architect or a city planner or a landscape architect. I'm not even a scholar. I might like to be, but I don't have the time. In fact, there are many people at Yale I should like to study under." John O'Leary was as good as anyone could possibly be in the face of all this demurring, and he, I think successfully, reassured her that the members of the Yale Political Union were interested in her as a unique national leader and political phenomenon and wanted to hear from her very much.

After John O'Leary left--Liz escorted him out--Mrs. Johnson and I talked further about the trip. She seemed rather inclined to do it, and also said she wanted to go up to Williams College and accept their invitation to dedicate their new environmental planning center. We began talking about some of the things she might say, and she had some ideas very well developed. She said that Nat Owings had come in and talked with her yesterday about the Baltimore freeway plan he's working on and a little village in New Mexico that he's been working to save. I think he wanted to report on these two matters to the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital. It was her feeling that we should always keep committee business to things happening in the nation's capital.

Then she said that Nat had asked us, meaning Mrs. Johnson and the President, to support the Pennsylvania Avenue Commission legislation, which is before Congress at the present time. She said, "I tried to explain to Mr. Owings that just because we stand behind something or just because we work for it does not mean the Congress is going to give us what we want." I made a comment that the President's shopping list was very long, and she laughed. She said,

"But I think we do want to work for the Pennsylvania Avenue Commission." Then she began talking about the National Square, which is the first item of the Pennsylvania Avenue Plan. This wasn't the first time we discussed it, but it was still of some concern to her, the large amount of pavement in the square and the terrible heat of Washington summers. I said I knew that there was going to be a huge fountain in the center of the square and also that tables with umbrellas and whatnot are planned, serving cool drinks I'm sure, and trees in tubs. But I think Mrs. Johnson still has to be convinced that that huge amount of pavement is the right thing to have in the city of Washington given our climate.

A couple of days later I met with John Galston, the staff director of the Pennsylvania Avenue Commission, and asked for a briefing on the square plan and relayed some of Mrs. Johnson's concerns to him. I was very surprised to see how schematic their plans really are. They haven't begun to figure out the gate arrangement for the White House precincts off of the square, nor have they done anything about the traffic along 15th Street. I hadn't realized that it was as sketchy as it was.

I had lunch at Kay Halle's. Kay is a generous and gracious hostess who lives in Georgetown who's been wonderful friends for many, many years with Ave Harriman, with Johnny Churchill, and a number of other people. Every time I've been at her house there's been some Churchill relation of some kind or another there. This time Johnny's stepson, Charles, just out of architectural school, was there. My reason for going, other than just to have a good visit with Kay, was to look at the plans for the Blair House Garden which she has been developing with John Painter, landscape architect of Warnecke's firm. It's going to be a lovely garden. All the flowers will be white since the garden itself will be used mostly as a moonlit garden in the evening time. A lovely plan, and I told Mrs. Johnson about it when I came back.

A few days later Kay Graham telephoned. It's one of the very, very few conversations I ever had with her. She was open and direct and talked a thousand times easier on the telephone than she is able to do in person. I made note of the conversation mainly because of what she said about Mrs. Johnson. After we discussed trees and Syphax School and replacing the dead trees and the pros and cons of various landscape architects, she went on to say that "In the beginning a group of us had thought that Mrs. Johnson was getting off on the wrong track by planting so many flowers. Now, I think she was probably right," said Kay, because she was doing that, and a lot of other things simultaneously. Kay also said that she had no right to criticize Mary Lasker, even though at times she was tempted to do so, because Mary really worked so very hard and gave so very much. Kay said she wished she herself could give more.

Oh! The thirty-first of August! This was one of the funniest things that happened in the White House. It's so funny that, well, we'll have to see whether it turns up in Liz's book or not. She might be ribald enough to put it down. I think most people are afraid of it, but I think history would want to know the actual truth of what occasionally, or what on this occasion happened. Mrs. Johnson asked me to set up a meeting with Fred Farr, highway beautification coordinator from the DOT, John Sweeney, assistant secretary of transportation who handled congressional liaison, Barefoot Sanders and John Gonella from our own White House liaison office, Liz and Cynthia on strategy in the House for the Highway Beautification Act. We had the meeting in the Treaty Room. Fred Farr came in before Mrs. Johnson arrived but after the rest of us were there, a bit breathless, and slid into his chair. And as he slid in, his trousers slit behind.

We all began to tease him and said this was the story of his career in Washington that he would tell his grandchildren most often. Liz quickly got on the telephone and looked for a sewing kit. The sewing kit arrived, but it arrived after Mrs. Johnson had. We all stood up and greeted her. Fred handled himself very well. After the meeting I took him over to the East Wing, parked him in the men's room. He handed his trousers out around the corner of the door. I took them into my office, sewed them up, went back, knocked on the door of the men's room. A hand came out, I put the trousers in his hand, and he was proper and able to depart.

At the meeting we discussed strategy involving members of Congress, and activating the conservation supporters. John Sweeney brought up a very real problem, which was the fact that many members of the Congress felt that their arm had been twisted two years before. While he did recommend that Mrs. Johnson speak to two or three key members, we all felt it was important to be discreet and not do the same kind of snow job that was done in 1965. After the meeting I called Spencer Smith of the Citizens' Committee on Natural Resources. It's a lobby group for the conservationists, the one and only paid lobbyist, and he said that the conservationists were alerted on highway beautification. They would be visiting members of Congress while they were home on Labor Day recess and then sending telegrams in when Congress reconvenes. On the sixth of September the President announced the appointment of Walter Washington as mayor.

M: Did you have any inkling that that was coming? I recall that you had said earlier that you did keep in contact with him.

F: I'd been in quite close communication with Steve Pollak, who was the President's assistant on national capital affairs, and knew that Walter was being given consideration, yes. Some little time before this Steve told me that Mrs.

Johnson and I would be very pleased with the President's selection.

Some time that summer, I don't have the dates noted, John Walker of the National Gallery of Art had contacted me saying that he was a close associate of the DeWitt Wallaces of Reader's Digest, and Mrs. Wallace has a foundation from which she makes grants. He asked of suggestions of things that might be done in the nation's capital. I gave half a dozen different suggestions to him of different kinds of things. The seventh of September he called and said that the foundation was going to grant twenty thousand dollars to do a little plaza at Bryan School up in the Capitol East neighborhood. This was one of the recommendations of the Halprin plan, that this very drab, weedy strip of ground outside the school fence be turned into a little neighborhood plaza. Mr. Walker also expressed his enormous pleasure at having been appointed by the President to the Fine Arts Commission and was really just tickled and delighted and said he hoped to be able to do more fund raising for us.

The twelfth of September we had a carnival out on the lawn for five hundred children of members of Congress and top officials. All of us on the staff had a job, whether it was managing a ferris wheel or a bingo game or antique cars or getting the kids to dance. I was charmed with some five and six-year-olds who were dancing to rock and roll better than any teenagers I've seen for some time.

I was going up to New York that evening and rode up with now-Mayor Washington, sat together on the plane, and he told me what had happened a few weeks before his appointment. He said the President had telephoned him to come down to Washington. He'd said, "A good friend of yours is sitting here beside me, and she and I think there's some important work for you do down here." That obviously was Mrs. Johnson. Walter said he came down the next morning, was ordered to the President's bedroom where they talked for a little while. Then the President peeked in Mrs. Johnson's room, saying that she was still asleep but, "She wouldn't want to miss a chance to visit with you." Then the President took Walter all day long on his rounds of one thing or another, took him into the Security Council and introduced him as being "my man," all of which just tickled Walter no end.

Then the President called Mayor Lindsay to tell him that he was appointing Walter as mayor, and according to Walter, Lindsay had a fit, saying, "You talk about improving cities, and then you cripple us by taking away the best people we have." The President had said, "Well, I don't know what you're complaining about. I had Walter down here working for me and needed him here, I had some important things in mind for him, and one morning I looked up and he was gone. You'd taken him. You never even told me you were going to

do it." Lindsay was in Washington at an Urban Coalition meeting. The President sent Walter and Joe Califano over to try to cool him off, and Lindsay refused to see them. Then on a Sunday afternoon I think, just before the appointment was announced, the President and Mrs. Johnson had Walter and Bennetta Washington and Tom Fletcher and his wife over in the afternoon. The President had said he'd read the FBI files completely on both men, and he'd never seen better files. There wasn't a fly in the ointment of either. Then he said, "Those gals who work for Bird in the East Wing sure like you, Walter."

Now, as a result of the bus tour we had in the spring, Mrs. Douglas Dillon sent a check to Mrs. Johnson for twenty-five thousand dollars, saying she hoped it could be used for one of the needy schools and mentioned Kingsman School. No, I guess she didn't mention Kingsman. She just said she hoped it could be used for one of the needy schools that we'd seen on the bus route. Well, Kingsman in Capitol East was one of the worst of these, with a big eroded bank. The school's high up on a terrace, and the bank was just a mess of erosion and mud. Larry Halprin volunteered to donate the plans to improve that site. Then we got matching money from the HUD beautification grant to the District, so the total value of the project was, oh, fifty or fifty-five thousand dollars.

In mid-September Larry had made a model of how this plan would be done and brought it in to show to Mrs. Johnson. She absolutely loved it, was just as pleased as could be, and asked about the funding. I told her that there were still fiscal 1966 monies which had not been expended by D.C. schools, and they wanted to use them now before they reverted to the Treasury. So there would be no problem in getting the money. She was all the more pleased because so often we've had good plans like Capper but then not had the money to undertake them. She asked Larry about the Nicollet Avenue Mall in Minneapolis which he's been designing. She was going to go out there next week to dedicate it, and he said he felt badly that it wasn't completed as yet. It certainly could be dedicated, but the water wouldn't be on, and some of the sculpture and clocks and various features were still to be completed and couldn't be done. Anyway they visited about that.

The next day Liz and I were working on Mrs. Johnson's remarks for his midwestern trip. Again it's a trip I did not go on, though I did work on most of her remarks for it. Marcia had been out advancing it. Nash did some of the advance, too, if I remember correctly. That day Liz and I went to lunch at the Hay-Adams with John Kluge, President of Metromedia. Kluge is an old-time associate from Liz's past, I don't remember just in what way. But she knew him, knew he was going to be in town and wanted to talk with him about highway beautification because Metromedia owns Foster and Kleiser, which is the largest billboard firm in the West and very well known opponents of highway

beautification. We talked at great length. Kluge was rather fumbling and not particularly informed about highway beautification. He talked about Metromedia's desire to have much better graphics and different kinds of graphics. They certainly weren't stuck on the billboard whistle.

I kept saying, "If there are really substantive objections to the legislation, let us know what they are. But if the opposition by Foster and Kleiser and the industry is only psychological, what can we do to heal it?" Well, Kluge responded to that very, very well, and he seemed quite ready to agree that maybe Foster and Kleiser and the Outdoor Advertising Association didn't have to stay out on their high horse and oppose the bill. After all, from our point of view of beautification, it's terribly weak right now. They're getting almost everything they want anyway. Well, within twenty minutes of getting back to the White House after lunch, Ross Barrett, who's president of Foster and Kleiser, called. This is about the fastest work I've ever participated in. He said not only Foster and Kleiser, but the Outdoor Advertising Association would support action on the Senate bill in the House. That lunch paid for itself.

The twenty-eighth of September in the East Room was the swearing-in ceremony for Mayor Washington and the new city council. I joined the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation at lunch time. I was invited, as the White House representative, to all of the meetings of the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Citizen's Committee on Recreation and Natural Beauty. It was very rare that I could free myself for the full day. But I always at least came for lunch or a morning or an afternoon because of the importance of those meetings, and the value for them of knowing that someone from the White House really was there.

The fourth of October we worked for several hours upstairs in Mrs. Johnson's room on the Yale speech. Now this was one that I had drafted much longer than it needed to be, but I wanted to give her all possible options of what might go in it. This was a technique I always used, of throwing the kitchen sink and all the spices into a speech and then letting her weed out and tighten and make choices, having seen what might be done. Elspeth Rostow was invited by Mrs. Johnson as well to read it, and she made a lot of very savvy comments. We all weeded and cut and tightened, weeded and cut and tightened. We had lunch there.

In talking about Yale, Mrs. Johnson made a curious statement about Mayor Lee of New Haven. She said there's probably no mayor in the country she has more in common with in terms of interests and projects. But she said, "He's no friend of the Johnsons." Liz asked her what she meant and said, "You mean he wouldn't go to the well with you?" She just demurred and didn't say

anything more. Liz asked me later on if I knew why she had made that comment, and Liz said something must have happened recently. Maybe he had spoken out about Vietnam. In the afternoon Liz had Charlie Haar come over from HUD to look at this speech. He said it was fine, fine, fine, just sort of a lazy, noninvolved approach to it. But he brought with him two single-spaced pages of what I had to call gobbledygook about new towns which he thought ought to be added, which was not only poorly done, but not really up to what Mrs. Johnson was saying in the speech.

Now, while I'd been doing the main draft that Mrs. Johnson was working on, Liz had also asked Henry Diamond and Katie Louchheim to do drafts, putting everybody to work. Liz and I concluded that Henry's was worthless--no disrespect meant. Many of the things he did have been absolutely outstanding, but he did not necessarily project himself into Mrs. Johnson's idiom. Katie's really did have some good thoughts, but in a way it came too late, although we incorporated two or three in the rush of drafting.

Monday, after the session with Mrs. Johnson, Liz came into my office and lay on the sofa all day with her feet up, and I sat at the typewriter. She had a copy of the speech, and I had a copy of it. We just bashed at it. People brought us lunch. We got the whole thing down. We did the same thing with the Williams speech. Really a very hectic way to develop speeches, but it does get it down. Then Ervin Duggan came in, also to help on the speech. Other than Mrs. Johnson's own major contributions, he was the most helpful person of any who had been asked to assist us, primarily in rearranging the material and loosening up the order. In many cases, however, some of the poetry and rhythm were cut back. Some of the sort of magical use of words was lost. It is something that often happens, I've noticed, in the President's speeches. Unfortunately, at this point I was not in a position to do much about it. I had contracted strep throat, and after getting the speeches done retired to bed and had an unpleasant time for a few days.

Now, apparently I don't have notes about it, but I went up to Williamstown and to New Haven to advance this particular trip for Mrs. Johnson. Liz and I went together, stayed at the home of President John Sawyer of Williams College. I felt that the people there were awfully dreamy and foggy and just hoped they'd get everything in order. We really felt our organizational abilities were needed. At Yale things were very different. John O'Leary and Kingman Brewster's staff were very much on the ball and knew how to arrange things and get them done. President Brewster was away, but we had a nice time with Mrs. Brewster in the afternoon. However, because of strep throat, I was not able to go on the trip with Mrs. Johnson. Liz and Simone went.

Mrs. Johnson called me when she got back. There had been some demonstrations, both at Williamstown and New Haven, about the war. Even though she had a standing ovation for her speech at Yale by the eight hundred people in the auditorium, there were pickets outside. She was very, very disheartened and upset and said maybe she just couldn't go on campuses anymore. I tried to encourage her and said, "But all those who know you and listened to your speech thought it was wonderful." But she was conscious that the press stories coming out talked about the pickets as well as the fact that she might have made a good speech.

Let's see. The days of the meeting of the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital I always met with Mrs. Johnson upstairs for an hour or so and discussed the agenda of the meeting, the last minute details, her remarks and little comments that she might make to different members of the committee, who was doing what. I also, a couple of weeks earlier, would have developed the agenda with her and Liz for the committee meeting and sent out the invitations to committee members. This particular meeting it was raining so, we'd planned to go out to Columbia Island and watch daffodil planters, we had to keep the meeting indoors. The landscape architect, Ed Stone, Jr., talked about the Columbia Island plan. He was really very unprepared, and while he was the landscape architect, he just didn't know much of anything about the plan. Perhaps someone else in his firm had worked on it. He mumbled away for a few minutes. Mercifully, a horticulturist named Charles Lewis from Sterling Forest Gardens up in New York was present, and we rescued Ed Stone, Jr. by getting Lewis up. Lewis talked about the daffodils and how they grew and gave everyone a primer lesson in horticulture, which everyone lapped up. It worked.

Later in October Nash arranged a meeting, which we held in the White House for prestige purposes, with the Corps of Engineers, the D.C. Police and the U.S. Coast Guard, to talk about Mrs. Lasker's proposed water jet off Hain's Point. We wanted to make sure that the jet didn't interfere with their regulations and that they facilitated whatever needed to be done to get it installed. They were very nice gentlemen and the meeting went very smoothly. I had been under the impression that Philip Johnson, the architect, had designed the jet, but he hadn't. Apparently Mrs. Lasker retained him to advise on the most suitable way to do it off of Hain's Point, and he suggested it just be a straight jet coming out of the water. Apparently the feature itself was being designed by the Park Service.

M: What date was that on the water jet?

F: The twenty-sixth of October, 1967.

Let's see, on the third of November we had a ceremony in the East Room for the swearing-in of the city council. The President gave a very good speech. He bore down on crime and did a delightful blend of what the public wants to hear and what he thinks they ought to hear. He was at his best. He also gave a real tribute to Charlie Horsky and Steve Pollak, who have been his advisers on national capital affairs.

I saw Tom Airis, the Highway Department director, and he was all in a twit about the east leg of the Interloop. Halprin was working on it, and things were getting out of hand. He was all upset. He said he wanted to talk with Joe Jensen, the assistant director of the Park Service, who was supervising Halprin's work on the park part of Anacostia. He asked me if I would call Jensen for him. Why he didn't think he could call Jensen himself I don't know. Bureaucrats with cold feet! You have to pump them up every now and then.

The fourteenth to seventeenth of November I went out to California. The Reader's Digest had done an article on the Big Sur scenic road. Each month they select one article from their magazine and have a little public relations event built around that article. In this case, they decided to put on a conservation conference out in Monterey, and tour the road. The public relations people had come in and talked with me, as I'm sure with others, too, on who might be invited to the conference. I had suggested several conservationists, including Helen Fenske, from Great Swamp, in New Jersey, and Ginny Hill Wood, from the Alaska Conservation Society in Alaska. The nice part about this was that Reader's Digest picked up everyone's tab, so conservationists, who very frequently put all their pennies into their projects, would have their transportation paid.

Then the Digest turned around and invited me to come out and speak, which I did. About three hundred people came for a dinner banquet. A number came down from San Francisco, Sierra Club directors and members, California Roadside Council people. My co-speaker was the director of Natural Resources of the state of California, the Stewart Udall equivalent of the state, a man named Ike Livermore. Unfortunately, to this group he was too much of an apologist for the lumber industry, so he was rather hissed and not received as well as he might have been. Since I followed him I could avoid any of the mistakes he'd made, and I think my speech was very well received. I did what I've learned to do, which was make a few notes and take portions from a speech I've made many times, and then talk from my notes rather than from text.

One of the people present was Dudley Swim, President of National Airlines. A great many of the people there were people who have given part of their property, or given easements on their property for park or scenic purposes.

The Director of Parks of the state was there, and then we had seminars for the next day on conservation hot spots--the North Cascades, the Great Swamp, the Everglades, Alaska, Kentucky, and several others. One of our hosts was Nat Owings, and he and Margaret had us to their absolutely wonderful home, as did Ansel Adams, the photographer.

M: Mrs. Francis, when you went to these various occasions and spoke at them, did you clear your speech in the White House with what you were going to say?

F: No. No, maybe I should backtrack on that.

The first time that I did a speech on conservation and beautification I did clear it with Liz. From then on I basically used the same speech, although about half of it became ad-libbing and embellishment. Then, and I'll discuss this later, I developed an anti-crime speech, and again I cleared it with her before giving it. But each time, no. I must say that if Liz had, ever had to clear any of her speeches with the West Side she probably couldn't have given them.

M: Very true.

F: On the fourth of December I had a conversation with Nash. Mrs. Enid Haupt, of Seventeen magazine, was giving sixty thousand dollars to do a pair of fountains at the south end of the Elipse. This was generally in the area of geographical jurisdiction of Nat Owings' plan for the Mall on Pennsylvania Avenue. However, Nash very clearly wanted Park Service designers to do the fountains, not Owings. I think his reasons for not wanting Owings to do them were severalfold. One, potentially the design work would cost a lot; secondarily, it might take a long time; and third, whenever given the choice of having his own staff people do things or outside consultants, he always preferred to have them done by Park Service people. I was somewhat concerned over the design abilities of people he might have available on this staff. As it turned out, the Owings firm did do the plans. They did them very quickly. They were sure under the gun to do them quickly.

On the seventh of December the White House was absolutely flying apart with preparations for Lynda's wedding. Liz asked me if I wanted to work at the wedding running messages. I think she was really asking whether I wanted a favor in order to be there, and I said I had no great desire to and really needed to be at home because our maid was having problems at the time. So she asked me to monitor the wedding on radio and television, which I did.

I went to have a visit with Monroe Bush, husband of Nancy Bush, who worked at the Democratic National Committee. Monroe I had known for a long

time. He used to be the executive director of the Old Dominion Foundation of Paul and Bunny Mellon. He is that no longer, although I think he provides some kind of counsel to them. I had been planning to get together with him for some time and wanted to talk with him about possible sources of philanthropy for many of the projects that we'd like to get done. He very frankly told me that the black situation was such that the kind of people who had money to give were not going to give it for parks or recreation facilities in black neighborhoods. He quite agreed with me that this was exactly the time to begin improving facilities for those people, but anyone he could think of who might have the money just was being reactionary. This was the first warning flag that optimistic little me had seen. Because members of our committee, of course, were very generous, and led by Laurance Rockefeller and Brooke Astor particularly generous for the ghetto parts of the city.

Then Monroe told me about Lafayette Park. I asked him how all of that came about, because Bunny Mellon had given four hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars to the Park Service to redo Lafayette Park. He said, "Well, it was just one of those spontaneous things, because of her fondness for Jackie Kennedy and because Jackie Kennedy had great regard for Warnecke, the designer of the restoration, as well as the new buildings around Lafayette Park." He said frankly he felt Mrs. Mellon had done this spontaneously and quickly, and it had just been one of those warm gestures that had happened long ago. He said if she really thought about it he would guess that she would not want to put so much money, or perhaps even prefer to put the money into the ghetto, because she was that kind of person. But, of course, it was water over the dam now.

Some little sidelights from, the eighteenth of December meeting of Mrs. Johnson's Committee for a More Beautiful Capitol. These are some of the things that aren't really in the minutes. We'd asked Nat Owings to do an up-to-date presentation on Pennsylvania Avenue and the Mall, and he nearly drowned the room with five great big models and six great big panels. It was more support than we really had room for. Anyway, it all arrived, and we got it set up. I felt his presentation, too, really strained the credibility gap. He breezed along, and Mrs. Johnson, interjecting a note of realism, asked when different elements of the plan might be accomplished. He said, "Well, everything can be done in two years. Two years from now." There was a sort of polite silence in the room. I thought at the time that if he'd been a little more realistic that the committee might have even assigned itself some piece of the plan to get busy on and do. But given that kind of generalization, everyone just sat back in dismay.

Oh, a delightful sidelight. About a week ago Mrs. Johnson had received several letters from people in Washington complaining about the huge Highway

Department green interstate directional signs being erected on Theodore Roosevelt Bridge and the approaches to it. I had called Tom Fletcher last Friday about the signs. He had had Highway Director Airis call me back, and Airis said there was one huge span on the bridge that probably was unnecessary, given urban speeds compared to out in the country speeds. They wouldn't put it up, and they would sort of take a wait and see attitude on the other signs. Their problem was they had a contract, and the signs had been delivered. Some were already up. When the letters had come in to Mrs. Johnson, I had placed a call to Wolf von Eckhardt and asked if he noticed anything about it, or if the Post had taken any pictures. Well, very shortly after my phone call the Post did take some pictures, and Wolf did do a little story.

So at this meeting of Mrs. Johnson's Committee Libby Rowe by this time had also heard about the signs and done her homework about them. She reported on exactly how many signs and what their dimensions were and where they were placed and how close together they were. She read all this off, and it sounded like the ultimate horror story happening right under our noses. The Federal Highway Administrator, Lowell Bridwell, was there and quickly jumped up and said, "They're going to come down." And everyone applauded.

Several of us--Henry Diamond, Nash, someone from schools, Diana MacArthur, several other people, I've forgotten just who at the present time, Elmer Atkins, from the District Beautification Office--had had a series of meetings to develop recommendations on how beautification might reinforce the need for employment. The idea was to develop some kind of program that Laurance Rockefeller would probably be interested in supporting. We had had Project Trailblazers one summer which he had supported, and at this meeting of the Committee he announced that he would support an extension of Trailblazers which would include this employment dimension as well. So that was very good news for everyone.

Jim Kise of Urban America came over with a proposal that Urban America has been developing for a study of street hardware, hardware being the lampposts, the signs, the trash baskets, the mail boxes, all the paraphernalia, both for pedestrians and motorists, which aesthetically and in aggregate constitute such clutter on our urban streets. His idea, which I thought was one of the most admirable things I'd heard, was to take a number of cities, maybe five, and have them jointly sponsor a study which would make recommendations of functional as well as aesthetic requirements for improved street hardware. Then these cities would themselves constitute a broad market, and manufacturing firms, G.E. and all the other possibilities, would then develop actual products to meet the criteria that the cities would establish in their studies and be assured of a broad enough market to be worth the innovation for the manufacturer as well.

It was so highly practical I was very impressed.

Street clutter was one of the things Mrs. Johnson's committee always fretted and stewed about. The very few times it was done well, like the F Street Mall, it was done on a custom basis and terribly expensive. You can only afford that kind of think on a demonstration basis, and you do it once. Then the rest of the street still isn't done and still looks awful. So I said I would work to get the District of Columbia as one of the cities in the study. Subsequently, Jim Kise and I went over and met with John Hechinger and explained it all to him. John was so funny. He said, "Well, how much money do you want?" and reached in his pocket as if he was going to get his checkbook out and write a check then and there. Jim Kise said, "Well, we'd like the city to commit"--I've forgotten whether it was one or two thousand dollars, not very much money--and John, on his word, assured that the city would.

I'm skipping through some things here, a January meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee. Maybe I won't skip it because of my observations about Laurance Rockefeller's ability as a chairman. He has a way of turning people's strong comments and desires into something constructive and workable. I talked about the Highway Beautification Act and the President's Travel USA program and how passage of the Highway Beautification Act would materially improve travel in this country.

Apparently I don't have record of it, I just didn't have time to put it down, but somewhere there in January occurred what is called the "Eartha Kitt Luncheon." I'll try to remember as best I can. This Woman-Doers Luncheon, initiated by Liz and Mrs. Johnson, was to be built around the subject of anti-crime and women's work in preventing or combating crime. It was turned over to me to develop speakers and the guest list. Cynthia and I both set to work on it, and secured, I think, very good, very successful and effective speakers. For the guest list we went to a number of different sources, including the Justice Department. I think I'm probably being kind, but my memory fails me as to the name of the aide in the Attorney General's office with whom I worked on this. I asked particularly for people from arts and entertainment who might have really been out in the streets, or taking kids into drama groups or doing that kind of thing. This was a category person that Liz had asked for repeatedly as well.

So this Justice Department person suggested Eartha Kitt. I've forgotten now just exactly what she had done, but it was that kind of thing of encouraging ghetto kids to use their time better. So she was put on the list. The list was duly cleared, as they always are, and everybody arrived for the luncheon. At these luncheons Mrs. Johnson almost always had one or two of us, usually Liz and

me, but one or two of us invited as guests join her, particularly when we had worked hard on it. So I was a guest at the luncheon. I remember walking into the room with Eartha Kitt, admiring her fantastic figure, trying to get her to talk about anything. She was just as uptight as could be, looking around, rolling her eyes. I almost wondered if she were high, although I'm afraid I haven't had enough experience with people who are high to know. But she was in a mood and certainly wasn't going to communicate. Anyway, I did my best to be convivial and cordial as we went into the room.

President Johnson came in at some point during the luncheon. This was, incidentally, the first of the Women-Doers Luncheons that Mrs. Johnson had sponsored. He complimented the women on what they were doing and gave a nice little pep talk of two or three, or four minutes, just cordial and light. I don't believe he asked for questions, I might be wrong, but at any rate Eartha Kitt jumped to her feet and said, "Mr. President" or "Mr. Johnson." She posed a question to him which was hard to answer and antagonistic. I don't think she mentioned Vietnam, but I think she just mentioned demoralization and not enough resources in the ghetto. She might have mentioned Vietnam, but, "My people and the people where I come from," implying the ghetto. The President fielded it well, partially answered it to the degree it was answerable. It was the kind of question that had no answer, which she obviously knew when she made it. Then he slipped himself out of the room. My feeling was that he had done a very good job in a slightly awkward situation.

Then a little while later, after one of the speakers, Eartha Kitt got to her feet again and said she just couldn't let this go on without interrupting, that she had something very important to say. What she said was that the people in the ghetto were so demoralized over the war, over the sons and brothers and lovers going off to the war, that the moral climate was fractured. Resources which ought to be going to help the ghetto were going overseas to fight this cruel war. That was the theme of what she said. It seemed to me that she talked for five minutes. When you're in a crisis situation you lose a sense of time and space pretty much, so my memory won't be accurate on that point. But anyway she repeated herself a number of times--urgent, high-pitched, articulate, forceful, convincing, persuasive.

If she had said it once and stepped down it probably would have gone all right. But the more she talked the more she repeated herself, the more urgent she got. She had the platform, and she wasn't going to let it go and really built up to quite a pitch. I at first just took it as an impassioned person. Then I realized that she was more than impassioned, that she was really very out of proportion psychologically, and I became apprehensive for Mrs. Johnson. I looked around the room, and my table was catty-cornered from Mrs. Johnson's,

and I was about equidistant to Mrs. Johnson from where Eartha Kitt was. I figured that if she lunged at Mrs. Johnson, and in my head that was quite a possibility, I could get there before the Secret Service could, because they were over by the door. So I got my chair back and was on the edge of my chair ready to beat off Eartha Kitt if she actually got violent. That didn't happen, but I was that apprehensive about what was happening.

Mrs. Johnson finally stood up and got Eartha Kitt to be quiet. Reporters later said there were tears in her eyes. There may have been. She certainly was emotional. I didn't see tears, but they could well have been there. What she said was one of the finest things I've ever heard her say, and in this case I know it was not rehearsed or planned beforehand. And that was, I'm paraphrasing, "Miss Kitt, I haven't had the experiences you've had. My life has been a very different one. I haven't seen or been to the kind of places you're talking about. But I think I understand what you're saying, and I'm sympathetic to the grief and disillusionment that people feel at this time. And yet--" Then she made a very fine statement of our commitment not to fight an eternal war, but to end it as quickly as possible so that the young men could go home, so that our domestic business could continue as it ought, and [she indicated] some hope on her part that this would be happening within a very short period of time.

Eartha Kitt's nostrils were dilated, and she was sort of snorting. Then Mrs. Hughes, wife of the Governor of New Jersey, stood up, a nice, big, overweight, grandmotherly lady who said that she really just couldn't let Miss Kitt go on the way she'd been going on, that she'd had four sons, all of whom had been in the war. Her first husband had been an officer in the air force; she was a proud and patriotic mother of proud and patriotic sons, and if some people were not willing to support our country's commitment in this war she certainly was. And she knew of a great many Americans who were. Between Mrs. Johnson's comments and hers this cut the tension in the room and cleared the air. Then essentially the meeting went on as it had been.

Of course, the press reported it considerably the next day. The press were present at the meeting. After the meal had been served we put up, oh, half a dozen chairs and invited a few of them just to come in and sit at the edge of the room to hear the speakers. Liz did some checking around afterwards on Eartha Kitt. We know that she went to a television station after leaving the White House and apparently intended to go on the air and say what she'd done. But it didn't work out, and she didn't do it. She left town.

M: What was Mrs. Johnson's reaction to this afterwards?

F: I don't remember specifically. But Mrs. Johnson was much too good a

newsmaker not to be heartsick over getting bad press from an incident such as that.

Oh, yes, I remember in part of her comments, too, she talked about why she had held the luncheon.

Tape 2 of 2

M: We were discussing the Eartha Kitt luncheon. Would you just go ahead and continue?

F: Mrs. Johnson had wanted to broadcast the constructive options the people had available to them. She had wanted to be using the White House as a forum for those individuals who were meeting the problems of crime head-on and doing something significant about them. For all these magnificent intentions, of course the story came out something very different and contrastingly tragic.

I was involved in a number of discussions in January and February with Fred Bohlen of the President's staff, who's handling national capital matters under Joe Califano, and with Tom Fletcher of the District government on the D.C. freeway controversy. Mrs. Johnson herself did not personally get involved in it, but she encouraged me to keep her informed. She was very concerned with the decisions that were being made. Throughout this period of time a number of citizen groups in the eastern part of the city were in touch with me about recommendations for inner blocks that they wanted to have developed, support that they were generating and developing in their local neighborhood newspapers for the Anacostia Park plan.

I wish to goodness I had kept a tabulation of the number of phone calls I had from people with unbearable amounts of trash and rubbish and old cars that needed to be cleaned up, or people who had some little scrap of empty ground that they wanted to turn into a park. There must have been hundreds each year. Many times the day didn't go by that there wasn't this kind of a voice on the other end of the telephone asking for help from Mrs. Johnson, from me, from the White House. A real grassroots contact had developed between the White House and the people of the city.

She received a letter from an art teacher at Eastern High School saying that his art classes had done a project to do pictures or models of the kind of house they'd like to live in. He thought the results were so remarkable that he wanted Mrs. Johnson to come and see them. She sent me over there, and I went and was enormously impressed by the imagination, the aesthetic sensitivity of these largely underprivileged, though some middle class, but largely

underprivileged black kids of Eastern High School. One young boy told me he was going to try to get a scholarship to the Corcoran that summer to study art. They were all very interested in vestpocket parks and began telling me of vacant lots that they knew that could be turned into vestpocket parks. They all complained about the lack of places to play in their neighborhood.

The art teacher, Eugene Markowski, is a highly trained and very sensitive young man who spent several years studying in Florence, who just felt it was his duty to try to help ghetto kids. Really, I felt an improbable person to be successful and so obviously adored by his students as he was. He was a very refined, delicate--hardly a father figure or male-image type of person, but one whose craftsmanship and genuineness, I think, had inspired his students.

Oh, my! The twelfth of February we had the second of what were at least half a dozen, and perhaps more, parties for wounded veterans. These were something that Mrs. Johnson had thought of, decided to do off-the-record, never publicized in the press, never known by the press. From Walter Reed Hospital she invited Vietnam veterans who either could walk or were in wheelchairs or could be brought out on cots. Some came on cots.

M: When was this?

F: This was the twelfth of February, 1968, and this was the second one; so there must have been one in January, too. As I say, there were between six and ten of them throughout that year. She, often Lynda, and young ladies who could be recruited from Mrs. Johnson's staff, as well as always two or three or four from the President's staff, then, entertained the veterans. Commonly, they were taken on a tour of the White House, sometimes led by Lynda, sometimes led by Jim Ketchum, the curator, and then brought back to the theater in the East Wing where a combo from the Marine Band played. There were lots of Cokes and pizzas and just good time and good conversation. It was an emotional experience for all of us, really a very emotional experience, because almost all of the men were mutilated in some way or another. Some were very much in shock. Some were able to cope. Generally the officers were recovered better than the enlisted men.

I remember one very shy, huge-eyed Negro enlisted man with no legs. He was from the rural South and a very shy, gentle person who would have had a difficult life anyway, but now without legs it was an unspeakable condition. I asked him what he was going to do, and he said, well, he couldn't go back to his town in the South. He knew that was a dead end. He had an aunt some where in New York, and he was going to look her up and try to go and live with her in New York and see if he couldn't get a job. I remember thinking afterwards, "It's

just conceivable that this man with this terrible impairment might even be motivated now to try harder and do better than he would have otherwise." We talked and joked and tried to get to know the people. It was a wonderful thing, and yet a very moving experience, too.

M: Did Mrs. Johnson attend them, too?

F: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. She moved around from table to table so she'd get a chance, in the hour or so that we spent down in the theater munching and listening to music, to visit with all of them.

M: How were you able to avoid any publicity on this at all? Was there never any mention?

F: Never was. You know, Liz was not turned on, and apparently no one observed that bus coming in the Southwest Gate. There's so many buses coming in and out, bringing the Marine Band and packing them off and bringing them back, in great big sort of olive-colored military busses, unless someone were looking for it they'd never see it.

On the thirteenth of February I gave my first anti-crime speech. I say here in my notes that I had approached it with considerable trepidation because in my own heart I knew that much of the anti-crime drive is racist inspired, and while I wanted to give an anti-crime speech, I certainly was not going to give an anti-Negro speech. So I worked on it long and thoughtfully and talked from the point of view of humanity and curing the root causes of crime, not just treating its symptoms. The speech was given to the Kalorama Citizens Association, a group of rather elderly, rather conservative people who were holding a meeting to honor two policemen who had risked their lives in saving some people from a burning building.

Police Chief Layton was there, Public Safety Commissioner Murphy was there, a lot of police. The two officers receiving the awards were just pure angels; their wives were very proud of them. Both Murphy and Layton were very complimentary about my speech. It went over well with them. In fact, they asked who my speechwriter was, and I said I didn't have such a luxury and I'd worked on it myself. Murphy said, well, if I had any extra time he'd love to hire me, sort of as a joke. Then Judge Halleck was also present, and he was very complimentary about my speech and point of view. But then he got up and gave a real rabble-rouser about rapers and robbers and criminals crawling in windows, and really just got everyone up on the edge of their chairs. I think the elderly people were, in a way, much more turned on.

Afterwards I circulated in the audience to see what people's responses were, because I knew that in talking to this group I was talking to a very typical, afraid, group of citizens, They were polite. They certainly were not offended. While I realized that what I was saying was perhaps liberal from their point of view, I had succeeded in not offending them, which I considered a coup. The members of the police, and then the police officials, did approve of it.

The first of March we had a meeting of the Committee for a More Beautiful Capitol. Generally the way we divided up the work was that I developed the agenda and worked on the program of the meetings, Cynthia got the rooms set up appropriately, notified the press, got the gate list out to the gate, that kind of clearance. This particular meeting we had no press coverage because somehow Cynthia had forgotten about it and Liz had forgotten about it. There was no great harm done, but while we usually worked very hard to get coverage, this was just one time we were going in too many directions and missed it entirely.

Oh, yes. The twenty-seventh of February Mrs. Johnson had dedicated a new research center at Children's Hospital. I had worked on her remarks. Secretary Gardner introduced Mrs. Johnson and really gave a stirring introduction of her as someone who stood for things, someone who made everyone she knew, everyone who knew her, a better person. He spoke, "Every life is a profession of faith." That speech of his is in a way one of the nicest things ever said about Mrs. Johnson, and I know it's in her files in multiple copies. Liz and I were sitting together, and we both cried when he spoke. It was so eloquent.

That day, the twenty-seventh of February, we had another party for the wounded veterans. Then in the evening the President was away. Mrs. Johnson invited the Abells, the Carpenters, Harry and myself, Ervin Duggan, Simone, Barbara Keehn and Dr. Hurst to go bowling with her and have buffet and a movie. It was a charming evening. We visited in the Yellow Oval Room first. It was the first time my husband had been upstairs in the White House, and both he and his father know a great deal about art, and fine art, so he was meeting for the first time many paintings he knew about and had been anxious to see. He and Mrs. Johnson had a long conversation about roadside information along the highway and about the Antarctic, where Harry's been and worked.

Oh! We had alternative recreation, either going bowling or going swimming, and Mrs. Johnson brought out several spare bathing suits. Then she was very kittenish, one wasn't needed by anybody, and so she just left it hanging in the elevator with sort of a sly little wink. Of the bowlers, Dr. Hurst had the highest score, Mrs. Johnson and my husband tied then. Then we had a buffet

upstairs and chatted some more, and then we had a long discussion over what movie we ought to see, a French love story or a slapstick Western. Our comments got very funny, and we finally, I think, saw the love story. Mrs. Johnson was full of humor and quips and bright remarks during the movie, lots of popcorn. My husband noticed a couple of things which he said he might not have expected. One was a very nice Peter Hurd hanging in Ashton's office, and also the autographed Kennedy pictures on the wall out in the hall. He said the presence of both of these changed preconceptions he might have had about what the Johnsons might have had there.

Oh, and the end of February, too, Perle Mesta came in. She wanted to sponsor a concert to be given by Pearl Bailey--and she was very sure she could get Pearl Bailey--to raise money for Democrats, but also to raise money for beautification. What had gotten her off on this, I'll say twit, was that she was furious with all the publicity the Kennedys received on their Telethon for Junior Village. She'd been a patroness of Junior Village for years and years and years, and she really wanted to get even. So she came in to ask me if there wasn't a beautification project we could do for Junior Village, and I said, "Well, doesn't that really look too pointedly like you're competing with the Kennedys?" "Well she said, "that's right. That's right." She said, "Let's find another project there in the ghetto that will help children and help young people.

I suggested a number of possibilities to her, having the strong feeling that probably nothing would come of it. And it didn't, but anyway we did chat about it. She looked out at the Truman Balcony and reminisced about Truman. He'd told her that five thousand dollars apiece was too much to charge for Democratic dinners, and she'd agreed. All right, she'd let the dinner admission be lower, but then she went out and raised the money behind the scenes. So she got the total that she felt was needed. She was lots of fun.

The sixth of March I spent over at the Democratic National Committee. I was a member of the Women's Speakers Bureau of the committee, as was Liz, a number of cabinet wives and Senate wives. In planning for the campaign, and we were getting quite campaign oriented at this time, I was a member of the Speakers Bureau. Potentially I would be able to go out and speak if the speech was about subjects I knew: urban affairs, anti-crime, youth, conservation, beautification, transportation. On any of those categories I was prepared to speak and could speak, and while a civil servant and Hatched I couldn't speak for a candidate. Nevertheless, it was still all right for me to be on the Speakers Bureau as long as I was careful about which invitations I accepted.

The day was sort of a revelation to me. What we did was that Jean Kintner had asked a number of us to do model speeches on different subjects.

Peggy Wood was to give a housing speech; Mrs. Alan Boyd was to give a transportation speech; Mrs. Bill Crook gave a speech on poverty; Gerry Komer spoke on Vietnam; I spoke on anti-crime. I have some comments about the speeches people gave, and I think they're perhaps worth recording. Peggy Wood was just enormously well informed and intelligent and very partisan. We all agreed that model speeches need not be so flag-waving on behalf of the Democratic Party as she was prepared to be. Mrs. Crook was fascinating on the subject of poverty. She used a number of case histories and case examples. My speech on anti-crime was just very, very well received. People became totally involved in it, and I felt very rewarded that it had come over well, because it was more a philosophical speech than a political speech. It was a highly philosophical speech really, but it was almost the best received of any of the day.

The day upset me enormously, however, because Gerry Komer whose husband had been in charge of pacification in Vietnam, got up and said that she had been prepared to speak on the subject of pacification, but since the Tet offensive we really didn't know what was left of that program and thus there just wasn't any information on which she could talk. She said she was not an expert on the moral or the military aspects of the war so wouldn't talk about those, but if Tet hadn't happened she would have been able to speak about pacification.

Well, I came back to the White House and talked to Liz and Bess and said, "With all due respects to the Tet offensive, we can't go around and say that we're just not experts on the moral and military aspects of the war and can't talk about them. This is in the bloodstream of the country, and if this administration can't hold its head high morally and militarily and speak to the point, we're going to lose the election." Liz and Bess sort of demured. I offered to write a speech on the war. Not that I wanted to do it, but I just saw that what the Democratic women were going to have available to them was non-existent at the moment and someone had to step in and do something about it. So I began collecting a file on Vietnam and talking to NSC people. There was, however, little positive that could be said. Before I ever got a speech really worked up, of course, the President made his announcement and decision.

M: Sharon, before we go past this point: had the idea of continuation been talked about, of the re-election of Mr. Johnson running again been mentioned by Mrs. Johnson at any time, or any indication or apprehension about his standing for re-election?

F: Let me look here. I think I have something which will

M: Maybe I jumped ahead. Why don't you continue if you [like]. Have you noted it

down?

F: Well, let's see. Something occurred, and if I have the date for you then that'll make it easier. Yes. On the twenty-first of February she and I were out driving, and I asked her if she'd seen on TV earlier in the day Nelson Rockefeller's declination to run for President. "Yes," she said, "it was a fine, well thought out statement." There was a long silence, and then she said, "I must confess I'm a little sorry." I didn't feel I wanted to press her as to why she was sorry, and I felt that possibly she felt that he would have been a worthy opponent. Conceivably she felt that he would have been a worthy next president. I asked Liz when I came back what Mrs. Johnson meant, because we often talked over these little things together. Liz just had a moment of horror on her face and then quickly recovered and said, "She must have thought he'd be a good opponent for the President." I said, "Do you think Mrs. Johnson might want him to run or feel he'd be good for the country?" "It couldn't be that," said Liz.

Now, Liz didn't know any more than I did what was in Mrs. Johnson's mind or even what was in the President's mind, because during this period we'd had a number of conversations about the campaign, getting ready for the campaign. Liz had talked very earnestly with me as to how much time I would have, knowing that I had a child at home. Any time I possibly could, and almost always, I tried to leave at five o'clock so I could go home and have those few hours with my family. Liz had pointed out that when we got into the campaign it would just be an around-the-clock business and she asked how much time could I commit. I said I certainly was ready to commit much more than I did just for regular work-a-day and certainly wanted to work in the campaign. She said, "Well, we're going to need you and hope you can do it." So we had several sessions with Jean Kintner, with Nancy Bush and with Endicott Peabody's wife--what's her name, Sally? Trudy Peabody?--on different aspects of the campaign.

Now, let's see. The eleventh of March we had a strategy session in the East Wing on the Highway Beautification Act--Alan Boyd, John Sweeney, Barefoot Sanders, DeVier Pierson. Their reading of the legislative climate was that the bill would lose out on the House floor. Not over billboards any more; that opposition, of course, we had quelled. The opposition was in a much larger context of just opposing the administration and the very high cost of billboard removal. Therefore, it was Allan Boyd's advice that we wait out 1968 with no new authorization, and then just include highway beautification in the 1969-70 highway authorization act, just wrap it up in the whole highway package. His analysis was that members of Congress always are going to support the highway program. They all are going to want construction funds in their districts, and we'd have a much better chance of getting beautification through on those

grounds.

Liz kept battling away at the man saying, "Well, isn't there a way we can get Cramer of Florida or Jerry Ford?" Alan said, "Well, if you spend all your effort to get one of them, then you're just getting one vote. This is the whole House that's going to be against us. We just don't have a chance." This is the first time I heard Liz say that we had too weak a bill to start with, and that Bill Moyers and Phil Tocker of the outdoor advertisers had drafted our administration bill over the telephone and it had the wrong name, beautification. This was the first time I'd heard Liz say that the fault was partially ours, but she didn't let the men get away with anything. She questioned all of them on their loyalty to highway beautification, just made sure that they were really giving practical and fair-minded advice and not trying to squeeze out of anything. After the meeting DeVier briefed the President, as it had been the President who asked that we have the meeting.

I had sent a memo to Liz recommending that Vice President Humphrey be made chairman of the President's Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty. The recommendation had been before the President for some time, but I said that the Citizens' Committee was going to meet on the twenty-ninth of March and that would be a timely moment for the President to do it. So she sent my memo over to him, and he wrote back on it, "Okay. Put in motion."

The twelfth of March the editor of the Kansas City Star came in to interview Mrs. Johnson. He wanted to do a full page story on natural beauty. She had a tea for him in the Library. I had done some briefing notes for her beforehand. I made some notes on her comments. He'd asked her if she were disappointed over the progress on the Highway Beautification Bill, and she said, "I think we'll get highway beautification when we deserve it." She said she believed strongly in representative government. When enough people wrote and expressed their wishes or their appreciation for better highways, then we'd have them. She said that this love of natural beauty was something which had been inside her all her life. Then she showed him pictures. She called for a scrapbook of the Hill Country and showed him pictures of the Hill Country.

Oh! Snafu! This may be in someone else's accounts, but it may not. I'll include it just in case. I had lunch with Henry Kimelman, assistant to Secretary Udall, and he told a wonderful story of how the President had called Udall last week from Puerto Rico and asked him to do anything under the sun to get Senator Bartlett's vote for civil rights cloture. I made a wry little note to myself: "And the blacks are saying the President doesn't care about them." Stewart had called Bartlett and offered him anything under the sun. Bartlett had said he didn't want anything, and he wouldn't really know how he was going to vote until

an hour before he went it. Among Stewart's own staff, Henry Kimelman had felt that Bartlett would come around, but Jim Officer, Stewart's other staff assistant, had been more pessimistic and feared that Bartlett wouldn't. Well, Bartlett was the person who cast the one-vote margin.

The irony of all of this is that the next day the White House sent forward the President's message to Congress on Indian affairs. When it had been drafted by the Department of the Interior it had some little clause in it dear to Bartlett's heart about Indians. I don't know what it was. But when Joe Califano's office had rewritten Interior Department's draft without having any idea what they were doing, they had left out that little goody that Bartlett would have wanted. Nothing was ever said either by Bartlett or by Interior, but Interior really hung its head. Henry Kimelman's comment was, "Sunday Bartlett could have had the sun, and by Tuesday he didn't even get a wooden Indian."

We were beginning to plan the Beautification Donors' Luncheon at the end of January which would be held in mid-April. This is the luncheon that Mrs. Lasker always generously helped the White House put on. The Society for a More Beautiful National Capitol wanted to send out a little fund raising brochure after the luncheon. The staff, this was actually some of Nash's staff over in the Park Service, asked for suggestions of items, and I called Mrs. Lasker on the phone and talked with her about the items that might be included in this list. We had quite a list developed of recreation equipment, of playground equipment, and all rather lowcost things. We didn't put any huge items, but everything from a few dozen dollars to maybe a few thousand. She was very against putting anything other than trees and shrubs and flowers on the list. Then she was on the horns of a dilemma, because we had to set the date of the luncheon in accordance with Mrs. Johnson's calendar and the President's calendar. Mrs. Lasker was very worried that the cherry trees wouldn't be in bloom then. Was there any way to have the luncheon when the cherry trees were in bloom? Well, that's the hardest thing in the world to predict, of course. At that point I was working on speeches for Mrs. Johnson's trip to Texas.

The first of April I say in my journal, "It was a no-joking day. Last night the President made his great surprise and announced he would not seek re-election. At once I felt as if a great pack had been removed from my back. I could walk freely and not be an apologist." Now, I want to parenthetically explain what I mean. Over the course, I would say, probably of the latter part of the summer, growing in the fall and into the winter, I had become increasingly distressed over Vietnam. I had talked to Simone about my concerns. They were largely-not that I want to say Earthy Kitt was right--in the direction that money was just not able to go into domestic programs and especially the cities where it was needed so badly. Here I was responsible for developing programs in the cities, and we had

all our planning done and the Treasury couldn't open up. I talked to Simone as I saw her as the one person on the staff I felt I could discuss this kind of subject with. I wouldn't want to broach it to Liz, because she would jump to a conclusion about my loyalty, which wasn't at issue.

Of course, I was very loyal to the Johnsons, but I still was disturbed about the war and the cost of the war. Also I'd read an article in Look magazine that Bobby Kennedy had written about Vietnam. I remember reading it on an airplane. I think it was when I went out to California there in June--April, May, June, something around there. It was a long, long, article, and I'd read it down to the bitter end hoping and expecting that in the last few paragraphs he'd really have something realistic to say, putting himself in the President's shoes, "How do you get out of this dilemma?" I was so mad and so annoyed, because after all his pictures and headlines and prose and ballyhoo all he could say was that we ought to try to get out. Well, the President knew that much. The President was trying to get out, too, and I felt while Kennedy had no more answer than anyone else he was playing upon a very popular mood in the country to try to get out. I remember talking with Simone about that and saying if we couldn't shape up on Vietnam Kennedy was going to come in and steal it away from the President. She tended to feel so, too. I don't think either of us had talked with anyone else. I did talk with my husband about my concern, too, and his advice was very good and I agreed with it. I kept saying how I loved the Johnsons and enjoyed them, and he said, "Well, if the cost of the war and its effect on the country impairs forward momentum in your program and what you are doing, then you ought to consider whether you want to stay there or not. As long as you have forward momentum in your program, and if you can't do everything at least there's some things that can be done, then you just have to decide whether you want to take a moralistic position on the war.

Well, I did not want to take an absolutist's position on the war. But then I had also found at dinner parties in the liberal white community, with congressional aides, with a number of our friends and associates, that I was put on the defensive about the President and about the war. And frankly I didn't want to be on the defensive. It was like that speech for the Democratic Committee. Anyway, I found the situation awkward and unpleasant. I had tentatively decided in my own mind that I would enjoy the experience of working in Johnson's re-election campaign. I would obviously have a strong role. Then I could decide in January, after he was reelected, whether I would stay on. Thus, if I left, it would be at a natural time. I tended to think that I'd been four years in the job; in a way I'd done the important things that I could do. I was repeating myself. Once we were through the election I would get myself out of the discomfort of being so closely associated with Vietnam and open the slot for someone fresh and new to come in and be able to do new things. Anyway that's

a long discourse. Everyone has to have their Vietnam explanation. That's about the sum of mine.

The East Wing was just shattered and glum and very, very sad and blue, really blue, about the President's announcement. I guess I was probably alone in not being blue, mainly because I'd had premonitions from that conversation a couple of weeks ago with Mrs. Johnson that she could look forward to alternatives other than his continuing as President. I sensed that probably all in all she would feel good about this. So in her behalf, as well as feeling personal relief about getting farther away from, the cloud of Vietnam, I wasn't blue, but it certainly changed our plans, to say the least. All kinds of people telephoned.

At four in the afternoon, Mrs. Johnson had Liz, Bess, Simone, Barbara Keehn, Ashton and me up to the solarium to visit. She said she wanted to talk with us right away about the President's announcement and its implication for us. She said it wouldn't be the chauffeurs or the beautiful Blue Room or the parties that she would remember about the White House, but it would be all the things that she'd done with us, that we'd added so much quality and value to her life. She hoped to make these next ten months rich and productive ones, dividing her time about half and half between, she used the word environmental quality rather than beautification, and the Johnson Library. She said, "So much of our future, as well as our past, will be in that." She said she hoped all of us would be able to stay with her right up until January 20, but if any of us got exciting offers in the meantime she wanted us to take them.

Liz spoke up and said how much we loved her and that all the long hours were worthwhile. I said that we wanted to work hard every minute for these next ten months and make them accomplish the things that she hoped for. Barbara Keehn began talking about how her daughter had cried over the telephone; then Barbara burst out into tears, and then Bess burst into tears, and Liz burst into tears. Luci was there with Lyn and mercifully provided comic relief. Lyn began crying, too, after Liz did, and Luci said, well, it was much easier for him because he didn't have all that eye makeup to replace.

Mrs. Johnson asked what the singing was that she'd heard outdoors last night. Bess said it was hippies."What were they saying?" said Mrs. Johnson. "They were celebrating," replied Bess. Then we talked about campuses and the strong emotions that were going unchallenged and unchecked in the academic communities.

Mrs. Johnson asked us all to keep our eyes open for people who ought to be put on guest lists of White House functions, because the next ten months would really be the last opportunity to thank special people. Lynda Robb and I

chatted there on the solarium when the others had left and were looking at the E. B. [H.] Shepard drawings that had been given Lynda by Shepard about Winnie-the-Pooh. Lynda read the "Old Sailor Poem," and we just chatted for a while.

Well, let's see. I'm missing something here. In mid-March--Heavens! How could I miss this?--Liz and Cynthia and I went down to Texas, fifteenth to eighteenth of March, to advance Mrs. Johnson's early April trip. Liz was very generous with her time and hospitality and went out of the way to show us the country. Of course, Cynthia had gone to school for a year in Austin. I'd never been to Texas before. Liz's brother Tommy traveled with us, and he and Liz kept up a brother-sister bit, alternately teasing and educating each other. In Gonzales we stayed with her sister Alice and just learned all the small town gossip. Alice's husband John is a county judge with zippered khaki overalls, and Cynthia and I bunked together in a bed. Tommy slept on the floor, and there were lots of cats around and really good barbecue.

When I got back Mrs. Johnson called me on the phone and asked how the trip had been and asked what I thought of the President's country. I was both delighted, and marveled really that she asked. I said that I thought it was country that bred either very plain people or ingenious optimists. Because the country is so vast, it's so rough, living is so hard there that people could either live or go broke just by their ability to foretell when the rains were going to come. People who come out of country like that successfully have really mastered themselves and their environment. I couldn't help thinking how far it was from the Kennedyitis. Bobby announced over that weekend, so I guess that's why I had him on my mind.

What time is it?

M: Twelve-twenty. I was wondering if you had an appointment.

F: Twelve-twenty?

M: Yes.

F: Gosh. Let's close. Let me do the trip. Let me do the Texas trip and then I'll stop. The third of April we had a little reception and movie up in the theater for the thirty-seven foreign correspondents who would be traveling on the trip. They were obviously very qualified and a very interesting group of people. My role on the trip was to help them with their stories. It was an informational role rather than a logistical role. All of Liz's staff, Bess's, and our beautification staff took part in the trip. The President came in during the film. There was a great rattling

at the door, and a couple of us jumped up and got it open. In he strode, and someone managed to get the lights on in time. He said--it was about 3:00 p.m. at that time--that he'd had a communication from Hanoi. He was going to study it. He hadn't had his lunch yet, but he was going to study it over lunch and see if any hope lay in it. He wanted this group of reporters to know.

Then he reiterated what he'd said, that in the next months he thought working toward peace was the most important thing he could do. A number of the reporters questioned me, as they did throughout the trip: why had he retired? Why had he retired? They gradually accepted my explanation, which was that any peace negotiations led by him at this time would be interpreted as political material if he were campaigning and running. In fact, it would be very hard not to time them politically in terms of domestic politics, which would be ruinous, or could be ruinous. Then their next question always was, well, now what were the chances that he would come back into the race?

M: What was your answer to that?

F: I don't remember. It must have been "No." I don't remember.

The fourth of April I worked all day upstairs with Mrs. Johnson on her speeches for Texas. She finally just got tired and lay down. Liz had gone to Florida to look at Lago del Mar, Mrs. Post's home, which Mrs. Post was disposed perhaps to give to the federal government if someone could afford the upkeep. Liz and George Hatzog of the Park Service had gone down to look at it, a very, very extravagant piece of property but also a lovely one.

(Interruption)

Now, I have notes that I made during the course of the Texas trip. It was fairly well reported at the time, and I'm not sure it's necessary to go into anything particularly here in the notes other than the juxtaposition of this Texas trip with the Martin Luther King business. Because King's assassination was, what, the fifth? I guess we left after the assassination. This I'm not exactly clear on; I don't have it exactly in my notes. But certainly as we were flying out to San Antonio we were awe of the assassination and aware that rioting was starting in the city of Washington. I felt very torn. I really wanted to be back at the White House. I knew the President was going to make a speech on Monday, and I wanted to be there working on it.

It was Mrs. Johnson's feeling that we certainly should go ahead with the trip. Her major reason [was that] not only had plans been laid on--people all along the way, you know, had baked their casseroles and were turned out and

had gasoline in their school buses to take us around--but in the larger context, while one piece of tragic and bad news was coming out of America, simultaneously she wanted to show the great, generous, warm heartland of the country, many of the Texas towns and small town people who really were not caught up in the racial crisis or the death of Martin Luther King. Many of the people, the Texas people we met along the way, were rather upset that flags were at half-staff. They didn't see any particular reason for flags to be at half-staff. They quizzed us, because we were from the White House, as to why it had been done. Of course, we explained that in the cities it was vitally important to have that symbol of respect and condolence for Martin Luther King. Mrs. Johnson was in touch with the President daily, or twice a day, on the telephone, and each day we reconsidered whether to continue the trip or whether to come back. He advised her to stay on, to keep her commitments, and that Washington was no place to be right now.

The final ceremony of the trip took place in the little town of Gonzales in the town square. Among the foreign correspondents Hector Legge, an Irishman, was chosen to speak their appreciation and tribute to her. He picked up--and Liz and I looked at each other and sighed with relief--the implication of the trip which was that there were many Americas and many riches in the country. The one he singled to speak of the most was the warmth and hospitality of people he'd met.

Let's perhaps leave it with that now.

M: All right.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview II]