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SHARON FRANCIS ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW I

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Signed by Sharon Francis on September 5, 1980

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ACCESSION NUMBER 81-68

INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 20, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: SHARON FRANCIS

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE McSWEENEY

PLACE: Mrs. Francis' office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 3

M: Mrs. Francis, you came onto the East Wing staff in March of 1965 and remained there through the end of the Johnson Administration in January of 1969. Before joining the White House staff, you had served as a special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, doing research and writing in the area of conservation. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you to give me a little of your background and how you came to get into government.

F: I'd be glad to tell you that. As we get further into the interview I will be referring to journal notes I made while working for Mrs. Johnson at the White House. At the end of most days I spun a piece of paper through my typewriter and recorded that day's conversations and events. Thus this journal supplements my memory.

I grew up in Seattle and spent a great deal of time in the out of doors which is so close by to that city. One can drive an hour away and be skiing. One can literally drive up on a Friday afternoon in midsummer and have an exciting mountain climb and be back early enough in the night to have one's own bath and sleep in one's own bed. As an active outdoor recreationist through high school and on into college, I gradually and slightly unwillingly became aware of the need for conservation, the need to protect the land that gave such enjoyment and stimulation. I say unwilling because during those teen years I hated to spend time doing anything other than skiing or climbing or beachcombing. The idea of licking stamps and going to conservation meetings seemed a terrible bore, and certainly something that should be undertaken by those who are elderly and no longer active. But I saw, really, one too many Douglas fir trees chopped down between me and my mountains, and I decided that I couldn't wait for the oldsters to conserve the land for me and my generation. I'd have to pitch in, too. So I joined a citizen conservation group interested in the North Cascades. Parenthetically, I had a real sense of fulfillment the day that President Johnson had the ceremony to sign the North Cascades National Park, because that's what I'd started on. And it was many, many years later, I might say, too.

When I went east to Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, leaving Seattle in 1955, graduating from college in 1959, I had a sufficient personal commitment to conservation that I majored in political science. I did my honors work on the wilderness bill which was before Congress at that time. My reason for going into political science rather than the biological sciences was that I had noted that the weakness of the conservation movement at that time was lack of political savoir-faire. There were outstanding scientists, outstanding outdoor experts of all kinds, but when it came to the political processes to get done what they knew was necessary they didn't know how to do it. It was into that gap that I placed my career, my life's work.

Then, when I left Mount Holyoke, I wanted to go to Yale to do graduate work under Paul Sears, who was a very, very fine, distinguished conservationist. I discovered that he didn't teach first year graduate students. He taught almost not at all--at that point he was quite elderly. Since in my mind he was the best person in the country, and if I couldn't study under him, I wasn't going to study under anyone else. So I turned my back on Yale and went down to Washington to see if I could get some conservation work. I worked for a year at the Wilderness Society on the legislation on which I had done my thesis. In the course of that, I made the acquaintance of Hubert Humphrey, of Clinton Anderson, of John Saylor, of Scoop Jackson--the leading proponents of the Wilderness Act, and also all the conservation hierarchy in the city. When I wasn't working in the office, I was spending my spare hours writing articles for the various conservation magazines.

Little did I know that these would bring me to the next stop of my career, which was that a congressman by the name of Stewart Udall had read some of these articles, apparently liked the writing and liked that point of view that I had. So, while I didn't have any idea who he was or that he even existed, when John F. Kennedy appointed Udall to his cabinet one of Udall's aides telephoned me and asked if I would come in for a job interview. I did, and right after the inauguration received another call from the aide saying, "Where are you? We're starting work." I said, "Oh, does he want me to work for him?" Because he had never actually offered me a job. So I did work on his personal staff, primarily on his book The Quiet Crisis, which was published in 1963, and thereafter on a number of research and writing projects of a cultural nature and of a "What are the goals of this country vis-a-vis the land?" nature and I handled a number of fascinating projects within the department. But your interview is not about that. It's about the White House, and I'd like to go on to that subject.

M: All right. Let me just ask you. Did you have any contact with the White House during this period? This would be 1961 through 1965.

F: One very amusing contact, yes. Mrs. Kennedy called Secretary Udall and said she

had a notion to give as a favor or gift, to heads of state perhaps, American rocks set in some base of gold or silver or some ornamental base. Could she see some American rocks? This ball was tossed to me, and I was very, very pregnant at the time. I talked to people in the U.S. Geological Survey and obtained polished samples of some very beautiful American rocks. The next project was to get these over to the White House for Mrs. Kennedy to see. Me and my quite large tummy, and a rather heavy box of rocks, made its way in the Secretary's car over to the East Wing of the White House and was met by--now I've forgotten who it was, but one of her social staff. I brought the rocks upstairs and met her very briefly. She commented upon them warmly and enthusiastically. That was the last we ever saw of the rocks and last we ever heard of the project. But some precedent had been set of my going over to the White House to do something.

M: To continue on, how did your appointment at the White House develop? When did you first get any inclination that it was coming about, and then the final offering of it?

F: Yes. During the campaign, Johnson's campaign in his own right for the presidency.

M: 1964

F: Yes. Udall had traveled, of course, a great deal and spoke on behalf of the President. He and Mrs. Johnson had shared a trip into Wyoming. They were in Jackson Hole; they went to Flaming Gorge Dam on the Green River. She had spoken to him of her desire to actually undertake work of her own in some way related to land and conservation, and it was their conversations which developed what she would do and the format of what it would be. I drafted some of her speeches while I was on Udall's staff, at his request. I'm sure she didn't know that. These were just drafts that Udall brought over for her to use. I don't remember what portion of my work she may have used or not, but I was the person he turned to to help him to do that for Mrs. Johnson. So, in his mind there was an association between me and her.

After the President was elected, in December, she invited a few people over to discuss the formation of a Committee for a More Beautiful Capital. I guess I have to go back for a minute. In the discussions that she and Secretary Udall had, both at Flaming Gorge and, my understanding, down at the Ranch, and I'm sure this will be in his transcript, two main needs came out. One was to mobilized the great unmobilized citizenry, particularly women, who could do so many things for conservation, for a better environment, and who just had not been turned on or given the right handle to pick up and become active. Secondly, Mrs. Johnson is being--and I'll use the word over and over again--a very practical person and wanting to do specific, concrete, tangible things that would be her projects and activities, couldn't see herself diffused all over the country. Therefore, she wanted to

set her hand to the Nation's Capital, to this city, and do things here, beautification. In this desire, she received strong impetus from Libby Rowe, chairman of the Planning Commission, wife of James Rowe.

Now previous to our meeting at the White House in December, Libby Rowe had come over and met with Udall, perhaps at Mrs. Johnson's instigation perhaps at Liz's, this I don't know, but they had had a discussion of the possibility of Mrs. Johnson's then forming a Committee for a More Beautiful Capital. So the meeting the White House in December was to discuss the possibility further. Both Secretary and Mrs. Udall went, and I went. The Secretary asked me to come with him. Libby Rowe was there, Liz Carpenter was there, others; I don't fully remember. The one person I really remember was Mrs. Johnson because it was the first I'd seen her. Now, I guess everyone gives you their first impression.

M: If they don't, I ask.

F: I want to give you mine. We waited upstairs in the Queen's Bedroom, and I have to say that I had all the total panics that people do have on a visit to the White House. I can't decide whether I've lost innocence or gained maturity in being able to get over that kind of panic. The weather was very bad. It was snowing. There were civil rights marchers outside the fence singing "We Shall Overcome" over and over and over again. Those were the days when that was the song. Mrs. Johnson came into the room. I did not notice clothes all that much, so I don't remember what she was wearing. One of the things that I later learned at the White House was to notice clothes. She sat down after we'd all shaken hands, and we were waiting for someone, perhaps it was Libby or Liz, or someone else. She said, "What are they doing?" I was nearest the window, so I went and pulled back the curtain and looked out and said, "They're singing 'We Shall Overcome,' and they're kneeling in the snow, Mrs. Johnson."

I turned around, and there was a tear coming down the side of her face. Nobody said anything. She didn't say anything and just let the moment sink in. We all stood there, and I guess we were communing with those on the outside. I kept wondering afterwards if those people realized how much they were touching the occupants inside the house, because the walls do look awfully thick and the windows do have curtains. Of course, they are there to touch them, but if I were on the outside I'd be very sure that the message couldn't get through. I remember that infinitely more than I remember the subject of the meeting and what was decided and really what was discussed. I did not make notes afterwards. I suppose I wrote my mother. That must have been the form my notes took at that time. But it certainly was decided to set up a Committee for a More Beautiful Capital.

Then, I don't have any particular recollection of working on anything in her

behalf, but it must have been in Udall's mind that I would be the staff person who would work with him on whatever was necessary to help her. This was never said, but the implication was obviously there.

M: At this point, though, you weren't in any way directed towards coming over to the White House?

F: Oh, no. Oh, no. Then one day in March, it was my birthday, the seventeenth of March, and it was snowing. It was also the day of the funeral in Cambridge of my best friend's husband, and I was planning to go up to the funeral. Secretary Udall buzzed me and said Mrs. Johnson had called. She was inundated by mail on the subject of beautification. She'd had an interview with U.S. News and World Report, which I think had come out in either a December or January issue. In this she had particularly talked about roadside blight and about junk yards and her conviction that we didn't have to accept this insidious blight around the country; things could be done, and she herself would undertake beautification work of various kinds.

Also, her Committee for a More Beautiful Capital had started meeting in January and February. I had not been a part of its organization or early meetings, but enough press activity had been generated that the mail was inundating her. So he asked if I would go over to the White House and see what I could do to help. I cancelled my plans to go to the funeral and went over. It must have been fairly early in the day because the funeral was in the afternoon, and I remember working until nine or ten at night trying to sort this great quantity of mail. There were several tables full of it. Somebody walked by and said, "You don't really have to stay so late," but I felt that I had a job to do and I better stay and just work as hard as I could. I sorted the mail. I drafted a set of possible replies. The following day I talked to Libby Rowe because she also had offered to help Mrs. Johnson doing this.

She and I agreed on these various sample replies. It amounted to a couple of dozen of them. I took them in to Liz Carpenter, and then we showed them to Mrs. Johnson, who was very pleased and who approved. In several cases I had drafted alternative replies to some mail, either for herself or Bess Abell. Bess commonly signed everything. My own feeling was that Mrs. Johnson should sign some of these herself, but I didn't know how she'd feel, so I had both sets. In every case where I had two sets she chose to answer herself, and she made the comment, "If these people have taken so much time to write me, the least I can do is take the time to write them." So in my first two personal encounters, Mrs. Johnson impressed me very favorably. I developed an enormous regard for her qualities on the basis of that first "We Shall Overcome" meeting, and then this one. Prior to that I think my feelings about her had been nonexistent and neutral, neither negative or positive. They just didn't exist. But they became positive very quickly.

The arrangement I had for working at the White House was at first totally informal. I came over to the White House either a few days a week or part of the day and spent time drafting answers to mail. How long it went on on that basis, I don't recall. But at some point I remember saying to Secretary Udall that, really, there was a full-time job to be done over there. I said this on my own initiative, and he said that was perfectly fine with him. He agreed that if there was more work to do there than at Interior, by all means I should go and do it. I don't remember the nature of my discussion with Liz then and how this was worked out, nor when they occurred. But it was several months on into the summer, I would say, before I really began working there full time.

Would you like me to speak now about the physical arrangement of offices? Maybe this is the time to do it.

M: All right. Yes. I'd like you to add also a little more elaboration, if you will, on what your activities became as you took on a full-time job there.

F: Right. First of all, Mrs. Johnson's staff worked in the East Wing. There was a social correspondence office. I call it a bull pen because when I used to work summers at the Boeing Airplane Company in a typing pool to earn money for college, the pool was called a bull pen. I don't think the East Wing used that term itself, but I did. Christine Stugard was in charge of social correspondence, and presided over the bull pen. She was quite a distinguished and fairly senior person on Mrs. Johnson's staff. She had her office next door to the bull pen, and then all the typists and correspondence drafters sat in this big room.

M: Who was that?

F: Christine Stugard presided, and I had a desk in the big room. Well, it was noisy, and it was hectic, and it was crowded. Certainly I was not going to type. I didn't mind drafting letters, but I was not going to type letters. First of all, I wouldn't know how. Second of all, I just wouldn't do it. So she had to assign first of all various typists, and then it came to be really one person, Cynthia Wilson, to work on the beautification correspondence with me. I spoke to Liz about the crowding and the chaos and that we really just didn't have room for everybody in there. So Liz devised the idea that I would move into Christine Stugard's office with her, and at least be separated from the bull pen by just a little bit more space and room. I'm sorry I don't know the dates of when that happened.

So that was arranged. Christine and I put sort of a screen between us, and I had my end of the office and she had hers. This happened within this first year. I became more and more operationally involved in beautification and had many people coming in for meetings as my work was developing a major function. My

end of the office was so much busier than her end that there was a tug-of-war, and it's difficult for the person who's been moved in on to have some other busier person sitting there. So there were frictions and difficulties. Then she and I had some disagreements over how some of the correspondence was to be handled, one of which I'll tell you about because I think it's significant.

A lot of letters came in to Mrs. Johnson about the Grand Canyon. During 1965 and 1966 the Bureau of Reclamation within the Department of the Interior under Udall, with a lot of congressional support from the Southwest, was hell-bent upon putting a dam at Bridge Canyon, which would have backed water up in the Grand Canyon National Park. Conservationists from all over the world were writing, and Mrs. Johnson received a lot of letters. I felt that it was an immoral thing to do, and that whatever position the administration had to take, Mrs. Johnson shouldn't tie herself down. If the administration took the position that the dam had to be built, she should keep herself back from the fray enough to say the great statesmanlike things about the Grand Canyon: "It's one of the great natural features in the world, a treasure of this country that none other has." She should keep herself on that plane rather than getting committed to a policy the administration might back, but which really was pretty bad.

Christine Stugard's approach when all these letters came in was to send them over to Interior and let Interior draft replies. I was very opposed to that because I knew Interior really favored the dams, and I didn't want Mrs. Johnson to get trapped into their policies, which were wrong from her point of view of preserving natural beauty. So I drafted a couple of sets of letters. One was a rather noncommittal one from Bess. One was a letter from Mrs. Johnson that really spoke out quite marvelously about the Grand Canyon and what it meant and symbolized, and her hope that all alternative means of supplying power and water to the Southwest would be explored before any irrevocable decision to build a dam was made. Now my reason for drafting it this way was that I knew full well that the Bureau of Reclamation had never studied other sources of power. They had done a feasibility study of the dam, ergo, there must be a dam.

There was enough of a tug-of-war between Christine and me on how to handle this correspondence that it escalated to Liz. Liz escalated it to Mrs. Johnson. Mrs. Johnson and I sat out in the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden over lunch one day, looked through the letters and discussed the problem. This was in the summer of 1966 and she commented on the very high quality and enormous personal feelings expressed in the letters that had been sent her. They were long, long letters of people who'd taken float trips through the Canyon or who'd seen it for the first time. They were very inspired, and some were quite sophisticated. Some weren't sophisticated, but they were very genuine and thoughtful letters. She quizzed me considerably on this question of whether alternatives had been studied,

and I went into the legislative history and the administrative history with her. She said that was something that concerned her personally very much.

She agreed with me that the letters should not go over to Interior. In fact, she did want to answer them herself, and to the degree that she could help shape the administration's policies she would do so. At the next opportunity she wanted to discuss the Grand Canyon issue with Secretary Udall. She asked me how he felt. This put me in a box because I really worked for him, and he had let himself, I felt, stay committed to the Bureau of Reclamation position too long. I told her my evaluation that what was needed was to get approval from the Bureau of the Budget to spend some more money to begin studying alternatives, and that while there'd be some congressional opposition to doing so, there'd be a lot of congressional support as well. She agreed that ought to be done. So I wrote Stewart a memo right after this conversation and told him about it, and sometime within the next two or three weeks Mrs. Johnson talked to him. The next time she saw him she asked if he couldn't get authority to have alternatives studied. He did so, and he was delighted to get out of the box he had been in. It was the right thing said at the right time.

While in the course of those discussions with her, my various differences of opinion with Christine Stugard came to the fore. These related to how involved Mrs. Johnson was going to get, or was she really going to refer correspondence to agencies the way the West Wing did. I strongly felt that she shouldn't, that she should have her own position and take a leadership role as much as she could. When there were problems that federal agencies were involved in maybe Bess or I would send over a memo to the agency and ask for a report from them in her behalf. She agreed that she wanted to operate in this manner. She also realized that I would operate more freely if I were out from under Christine Stugard, physically and every other way. She asked if there was any room for me to have an office of my own, and I said, "Well, there is a room across the hall. Marvin [Watson] has it closed up. I don't know what his intention is." The next night I was working late, by coincidence because I didn't work late that often. I have a home and a child. But I was working late, and she and Marvin came down the hall with flashlights and a little, sort of embarrassed, "hello" to me; no conversation. They were in that office looking around. A few days later I had a call from Marvin: "Mrs. Johnson would like you to have that office across the hall."

M: What had been in it?

F: That I don't know. Having an office didn't matter all that much to me, although it obviously had an effect on other people as to whether you have an office of your own or one in a corner of someone else's office. When I moved over there I saw that in the front of the room there was room for someone else, and as my work had

become more involved in policy and operations I had turned more and more of letter drafting over to Cynthia Wilson. So I quickly thought, "Should I ask to have a clerk-typist come over here and answer phones and be a strict secretary, or should I ask to have Cynthia come, who's a pro in her own right?" And there was no question; I asked if Cynthia could join me. Liz thought it was fine, and Mrs. Johnson thought it was fine. So Cynthia and I both moved over there. This must have been early fall of 1966.

So the first year and a half I was really getting my feet on the ground and working into the responsibilities I had. Incidentally, I was always on Interior's payroll. In September of 1966 my job description at Interior was actually rewritten as "Staff Assistant for Beautification," reporting to the Secretary and assisting Mrs. Johnson. The definition of my responsibilities was worked out officially at that time, a year and a half after I started. These then included: supervising the answering of all Mrs. Johnson's correspondence on beautification, conservation, urban affairs, and environment; all the necessary staff work associated with preparing the meetings of her Committee for a More Beautiful Capital and following through on what might have transpired at those meetings; drafting with Liz, but I assumed the primary responsibility, all of Mrs. Johnson's speeches, including speeches on her trips as well as little offhand remarks when she'd be greeting a few people here and there. We would have thought out beforehand what would be included in those remarks, and a draft would have been run through the typewriter. Mrs. Johnson would have looked it over, thought it over, and memorized it.

M: Was this beyond the area of beautification?

F: Yes.

M: It was everything?

F: Yes. It's so tempting to digress, and I will for a second. It's more fun.

Liz began calling me the "East Wing Egghead," which I always considered very amusing, because any real intellectual wouldn't recognize me as one. But I was just enough of an egghead compared to some of the people who were there that it was a label Liz tacked on to me with good humor and good will. But when things had to be thought about, they'd be thrown at me. As things developed, I worked much more with Liz than I did with Bess. Cynthia branched out and helped Bess often and also, because Cynthia was single, helped at social functions a great deal. On one or two occasions I did do that. I did work closely with Bess in planning any of the social functions that were for the Beautification Committee or for conservationists of one kind or another. As a matter of fact, Bess's office would turn over to me development of the invitation list, the format of what the occasion would

be, and working with Mrs. Johnson on who ought to be invited. The "who's who" is a considerable job. But Bess's office was sufficiently overtaxed that whenever any of these came into my subject matter area I'd take on the strategy. Cynthia would take on more of the mechanics of carrying it out and getting it done.

Let me try to describe a little bit more the speech relationship with Liz. Usually the way we would work is that I would do a first draft. Sometimes Liz would have spun a piece of drafting paper through her typewriter. I don't know why she managed to get cheaper drafting paper than the rest of us did, but somehow; I guess it's the newspaper reporter. She'd spin something through her typewriter that would have a lot of great quotes on it, because Liz just couldn't turn out anything that wasn't magnificently quotable. That had never been my experience or strong point. So we supplemented each other very well in developing speeches. But I would do the main research and work on the text of the speech, and then Liz might or might not work on it again. Sometimes she'd just not have time and say, "Send it up to Mrs. Johnson." Sometimes she really would want to work on it, take it and modify it. On some of our trip speeches we'd parcel them out, particularly to Ervin Duggan from Doug Cater's office, who was extremely good and helpful.

M: Let's stay on this a minute. Tell me a little bit more about what it was like to write speeches for Mrs. Johnson. Did you grasp what her direction was in giving a speech, her abilities were in giving a speech, and did you incorporate these?

F: Yes, I did. I found it ever so much easier for me to write for her than it ever had been for Udall. I've never known whether this was a feminine-masculine thing. I know it's subtle, and I know it's complex, but subtly and complexly there are many areas in which my thinking is very similar to Mrs. Johnson's. In fact, we overlap, in a practical and yet cheerful and constructive approach. So, innately what she chose as her emphasis was my own emphasis, too. In terms of writing, after a few tries I found it quite easy to get into her vernacular and her means of expression. Now I say this, and yet Liz also was in her vernacular, so we were bringing out differing facets of Mrs. Johnson.

The process of working with her on a speech was a thoughtful one. Inevitably we would have a speech conference upstairs in her bedroom, very often over sandwiches because it would occur at that point of the day. Mrs. Johnson would take the draft, maybe it would be my draft or something Liz and I had done together, and begin reading it aloud. The two of us would sit with our copies, and we would remodify it there as she was reading it aloud. Immediately we would hear as she read that something wasn't sounding right, wasn't sounding like her. Or she would say, "But we haven't yet mentioned this and this, and shouldn't we add them?" And we'd discuss, "Yes, we should add them." Or Liz and I would disagree with her if we felt we should, although it wasn't that often that one had disagreements with her.

Usually Mrs. Johnson would only have time to give that one session to a speech, and then she would trust us to go back, and the next time she'd see it, it would be on little speech cards ready for her to give. At times, too, then, she would underline with her pen and change words around on her speech cards.

M: Did you have to clear any of this with the West Wing and with Mr. Johnson and his staff?

F: No. Simple answer.

M: Did you ever have any effect after say a day or so had gone by and some changes made in the direction of something, and it would probably have emanated from the fact that she'd discussed this with Mr. Johnson?

F: Oh, yes. I want to get into a number of those situations as we go along in the interview, because there were several major policy areas which she and I spent a lot of time on and then indeed she did take up with the President. In fact, in some cases we both took up with the President.

Speaking of the West Wing and digressing back to the Grand Canyon for a moment: Some of the Grand Canyon letters over her signature had gone out when I had a phone call from Mike Manatos in the West Wing: "What on earth are you girls doing over there? Don't you realize that the Southwest has to have water and the Southwest has to have power? What's going on? What's Mrs. Johnson writing these letters about preserving the Grand Canyon for?" I said, "Now, wait a minute, Mike." And I began thinking back in my head, Mike Manatos, Wyoming, water interests. I knew that the President wasn't committed and hadn't taken any position, but I didn't know how deeply he might imminently be going to be committed. I gambled with Mike. So I went into the background and my discussion with Mrs. Johnson and what she had said, and I've never seen anyone back away so fast in all my life as Mike scurried off that telephone. The fact that it had been discussed with Mrs. Johnson and what her feelings were and why, and that either she had just talked to Udall or she was about to talk to Udall changed him quickly.

We haven't discussed the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital. Maybe this is time to do so.

M: I was wondering if there was any other area in your speech writing capacity.

F: Things may occur to me later on, and if it's all right, I'll digress back. At the moment, no.

M: That's fine. All right, it would appear from what you're saying that this really got

under way under the impetus of this Committee for a More Beautiful Capital. Since we're at that point, would you tell me what your activities were in connection with that?

F: I attended my first meeting of the committee, I think, perhaps in April or May of 1965. Initially, my work at the White House was just on correspondence. Then I think Liz or perhaps Mrs. Johnson had the idea that I ought to attend the committee meeting. Of course, the minutes of the committee meetings are available, and there's no point in repeating what occurred at them. I began to develop working relationships with a number of members of the committee, very particularly Walter Washington, who was head of the National Capitol Housing Authority at that time and who always and so eloquently spoke on the fact that beautification could be an antidote to the conditions that breed antagonism and riots and resentment in urban areas. If you emphasize cleanup, if you emphasize early activities on the part of children of making little gardens and caring for their environment, this leads into home repairs and taking care of property and many other steps such as improving playgrounds and putting lights up in playgrounds so people can use them at night time in the crowded neighborhoods. You're materially enhancing what the eyes and I guess noses and ears of people in the city experience, the things that influence their perception.

This struck a note with me that seemed particularly important. And that was that beautification could not only delight the eye, but also in some positive way really touch one of the deeper problems of our society at that time and at this time, too, and that's the living conditions of people in the inner city. I saw this as of considerable significance, and my early activities in arranging trips where Mrs. Johnson would go out to a school and visit the children in the classes and see what they'd done in beautification, the landscaping they'd done outdoors, the posters they'd made inside the school, reaffirmed in my own mind the really deep effect she and her program were having in this sector of the city. I credit Walter most particularly with opening certainly my eyes and hers to the fact that she could operate in this area and be successful and loved and received. Poor man, he had really no staff to help him help her. So many times I worked with him. He'd get an idea for an activity that she could do or her committee would do, and I'd set to work on it to carry it out and make it happen.

M: How about some of these activities? Do you recall some of them?

F: The Beautification Committee went out many, many times to plant a bush here, to have a little ceremony there, to listen to a high school band play, and it was very jolly and very cheerful and very, very warm. Walter was largely responsible for setting these events up, and I worked on her end to deliver her appropriately saying the right things, walking in the right direction with the right people around her. Marcia

Maddox, of course, set up the pictures and made sure they came out right. I never knew that had to be thought about, but that was one of the many things I learned at the White House.

I'd like to tell you about one contribution I made which is in this direction, and I think it's one of the more important things I did. In that first year I began to realize that within the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital there were two directions. One was the Walter Washington/Polly Shackleton direction of helping needy people, and particularly the black people of the inner city. The other was, and I'll polarize this, the Nash Castro/Mary Lasker direction of flowers in the monumental and tourist parts of the city. I saw Mrs. Johnson embracing both and wanting her program to cover that span. Then you had all kinds of projects in between. You had Libby Rowe wanting more street trees; you had Libby Rowe fighting freeways, and Mrs. Johnson agreed and gave support. I'll go into freeways much later on.

So I perceived my duty as her staff assistant to give help and encouragement across the board. However, there was an inequity. There was an inequity in staff support and professional support, because the projects that Mrs. Lasker instigated for planting in the monumental part of the city could be carried out by the Park Service, with all their staff and personnel and landscape architects on the payroll. When Walter Washington wanted to help a school in the ghetto there were not professionals who could do design work; there wasn't a nice Park Service budget that could be then augmented as Mrs. Lasker did with the Park Service. So the schools and neighborhood projects needed help more, and one of the people who discussed this problem with me was a member of the committee, Stephen Currier.

Stephen Currier and his wife Audrey Mellon Bruce Currier died in an airplane crash in the Caribbean in February of 1967. In probably August or September of 1966 he talked to me as a member of the committee about his desire to contribute to what he thought was important. He felt the committee needed and lacked professional assistance, particularly vis-a-vis the needy, socially concerned areas of the city. Since one of Currier's major philanthropies was supporting civil rights sit-ins in the South--he had set up and financed the Potomac Institute, which has been a major source of assistance to the civil rights movement--he had an orientation in the direction of helping the needy and black part of the city. We discussed several options of what he could do to aid Mrs. Johnson and the committee, one of which would be to pay the salary of an additional staff person to help us, another would be to bring in the professional services of a consultant. I did a memo to Liz, and we discussed it with Mrs. Johnson and we discussed it with Nash. Nash and I, both reacting like good bureaucrats, didn't want another staff person brought in parallel, over, under, or what have you. Nor did any of us feel it would be right to have a staff person paid by an

outsider. So we preferred the direction of wanting to have a consultant, and there the question rested.

In September of 1966 Mrs. Johnson took a trip to California and the Southwest. I worked on her speeches for the trip, not on advancing or any of the logistical arrangements, which were never my strong point. There were many people who were very good at it, like Marcia and Marta. Cynthia worked into trip advancing and became extremely good at it also. But sort of in the last minute, I think maybe to fill the airplane and because I had worked hard on the speeches--Mrs. Johnson had liked them--Liz asked me to go along with no particular assignment or duties other than to meet with conservationists along the way and just talk, communicate with people, learn what was in people's minds. I did go, and in San Francisco early in the morning, in a new city, I couldn't sleep and just wanted to get out and see things. I'd heard about Ghirardelli Square, which was an old chocolate factory that had been very charmingly and innovatively turned into a plaza and shopping area. It was a very attractive place, a fascinating place. So I got a taxi and was taken over there at about six-thirty in the morning from the Fairmont Hotel. It was marvelous. It was beautiful, absolutely charming, and I wanted Mrs. Johnson to see it too.

I came back to the hotel, and she was up at this point. We rehearsed her speech which was to be given late in the morning at Carmel. She still had a good hour to an hour and a half before we had to leave. She said, "What should we do? Is there anything I should see?" I said, "Well, I've just been out, and I've seen the most marvelous place, Ghirardelli Square. I told her about it, and she said, "Good. Do you know how to get there?" I said, "Yes." So down we went the back stairs. Liz came. On the way we stopped at Lombard Street, which is a place that zigzags down a very steep hill, and there are great, blue hydrangeas. We got out of the car and walked down among the hydrangeas and looked at them. Then we went over to Ghirardelli Square. She was just as enchanted, and Liz was. We wandered around and looked in the shop windows. The gardener was there, and the fountain was just being turned on. Mrs. Johnson talked to the gardener for a while.

M: Did he realize who he was talking to?

F: Yes. But there were two ladies in nice tweed suits and good flat, solid shoes with cameras, and they saw us. Well, I was wearing a yellow costume, Mrs. Johnson was wearing red, and Liz was wearing bright green. Or maybe vice versa on the latter, but anyway we were definitely colorful. The ladies asked if we wouldn't mind posing over by the fountain. They did not realize who she was, and they snapped their pictures.

M: What would you do in a situation like this? Do you introduce these ladies?

F: No. No, we just posed and chuckled inside. As we were walking down the stairway back down to the street, there was a man with a group of maybe half a dozen really rough looking teenage boys.

M: You, of course, had the Secret Service along with you.

F: Oh, yes. They were coming up, we were going down, and we sort of met at a platform. One of the boys stepped forward and said, "Mrs. Johnson?" Jerry McKinney, the agent with us, got up to him like this, you know, shoulder to shoulder, bulldog teeth bared, and it was one of those ghastly moments. Mrs. Johnson was just as calm and said "Good morning. Isn't it a lovely day?" Of course, Jerry just melted off into the background. Then she said "Good morning" to all the boys and shook all their hands, and we went down the steps. Then Liz berated Jerry thereafter, "You Secret Service, always turning everything into a confrontation!" We heard that many, many times.

In the car driving back to the Fairmont, Mrs. Johnson asked who had done the landscaping work at Ghirardelli Square. Well, I'd learned that Lawrence Halprin, a San Francisco landscape architect had done it. He'd been at the White House Conference on Natural Beauty. His name often came up when the best talents were being talked about, and I knew enough about the field at this point to realize that many people consider him the most creative landscape architect in the country; if not the most. So I told her what I knew about him, and she said it would be an honor to work with someone like that. I asked whether maybe this was what we ought to do with Stephen Currier's offer--bring Larry Halprin in. She said, "Yes. Let's talk to Stephen as soon as possible and see how he feels about that." So when we got back to Washington I called Currier. He was a great admirer of Halprin's and couldn't think of anything better, and how marvelous that Mrs. Johnson had thought of something like that. He called Halprin and told him to get in touch with me. Halprin did, and paid by Stephen Currier he then came to Washington several times during the fall of 1966 to look at what had been done so far in beautification, to look at the needy areas of the city and to make recommendations for Mrs. Johnson's committee.

M: Was this primarily in the needy areas?

F: Yes. Halprin is a stimulating, bearded, vital, creative kind of person. I wonder if I should go to my notes on any of this and be more specific in terms of time.

(Interruption)

Around mid-October, 1966, Larry came to Washington for about a week of meeting with members of Mrs. Johnson's committee, meeting with her, going around and

looking thoughtfully at what had been done and what needed to be done. I arranged the schedules and accompanied him on this. I'm looking now at some notes I made at the time. The thirteenth of October, in which Nash Castro, Walter Washington, Polly Shackleton and I took Larry to look at a number of sights. Nash showed him the plantings that had been done by the Park Service so far. He took him out to National Airport and drove him around that circle in front of the airport and asked whether he didn't think something could be done about that and shouldn't be done about it. Larry had said, "Well, you can put plants here, and that ought to be done. But the whole layout of the airport is an absolute mess, and I wouldn't spend my time or anyone's money putting plants here without looking at the larger question of traffic circulation and everything else."

There was a polarization within the car, with Nash really on one side and the rest of us I guess on the other side feeling that Larry's work should be directed toward the most blighted areas of the city. Nash had to leave to go to a meeting. Walter and Polly and Larry and I went to Hall's Seafood Place for lunch, and we sort of let our hair down and everyone quit being polite. Larry said, honestly, that if we just wanted him to do flower beds he'd recommend people, but frankly he thought the Park Service was doing it very well. If we wanted to get into some of the more serious problems, he would feel challenged by doing so. So in the afternoon Walter directed the tour primarily, took him by Capper Public Housing, which is great, tall towers and just an open dirt space in the middle with no recreational facilities. The first thing Larry said was, "Where do people shop around here?" Walter said, "Well now, that is the point. We've built housing, but we haven't built community facilities to go with the housing."

Then we went up on the bluffs above the Anacostia River, down south of Bolling Field, to a park area where Walter very eloquently described how he'd had jam sessions that summer and staved off disturbances among the kids by lots of volume, lots of music, lots of good punch and cookies and things to eat. Larry said, "Wouldn't it be marvelous to have a ferris wheel up here on this bluff, or to have swings that would go out over the cliff, or to have a great fair-like activity center up here year-round rather than just doing it in the summer?" So Walter said, "Well now, this isn't all. I want to show you some more land and sights." Walter drove him all around Anacostia. I guess this was the next day, because we spent a whole day, and I went along too, east of the river, just street after street, block after block. Anacostia is the one neighborhood up until that time where Washington had had civil disturbances; a little public housing area blew up over management problems. Larry kept saying, "Walter, I don't know why you're spending so much time showing me all of this. It's sort of middle class, lower middle class. What's so bad about it?" Walter said, "Well, you'll see."

We drove on up and down the streets, back and forth, hour after hour. Larry

said, "Are you trying to tell me it's boring over here?" Walter said, "Now you're getting it. Yes!" So by that time Larry was able to say, "Well, yes. Now there was a theater here, and about six miles away there was another movie theater and there was this place to shop and that place to shop." Just miles of not particularly beat up, but monotonous housing and nothing to do. Then Walter began giving him the statistics of how crowded those houses were and how many teenagers were involved and where they played. We sort of played the game of being a teenager in this area, and what would you do and where would you go and what recreation options would there be open to you? I think Larry began to rely upon Walter as the primary resource person to him for the recommendations he would develop for Mrs. Johnson's committee. He relied on a lot of other people closely, too; Polly Shackleton very much, Stewart Udall very much, but I think Walter most particularly because Walter pointed him in the direction of the most vital needs.

Mrs. Johnson drove out with Larry--I'm again looking at my notes--and he showed her a number of vacant lots where he thought of vest pocket parks, and school grounds where he saw ways to link school grounds and make campuses, close off streets and link the out of door space around adjacent schools and augment the recreation space available to children. I want to quote this from her because I think it's very typical of her and also very indicative of the kind of person she was. He asked for her comments, and she said, "Well, I'm no expert in these fields. You experts who know how to do the things must make the judgments. All I would say is that any area this committee undertakes should be usable by lots and lots of people. It should be fun, and its maintenance should be easy because any project we sponsor will be a stepchild of the city." This was something that she was to say over and over and over again. The projects must be usable by lots of people, and they shouldn't be so exotic that they'd be expensive to maintain.

She also asked Larry twice in the course of that trip how long it had taken him to do Ghirardelli Square. He said it took eighteen months. At the time, and here's my journal entry, 14 October, 1966, I'm saying to myself, "I think in the back of her head Mrs. Johnson was thinking that she only had two years left." We passed the Mall, and I commented that I was rather embarrassed by those twiggy little dogwood trees. They were so little when they were planted, and they just looked like soldiers, skinny. In fact, they must have been sailors they were so skinny. A lot of people were complaining about them, too. They really looked awful. She said they had been bothering her, "Let's call Nash and see if the Park Service couldn't take a few and sort of scatter them around a little bit so they won't look quite so regimented and soften up the lines. Maybe we should have been more patient and waited until the trees were larger before we planted them." Because really, these small trees were bringing criticism rather than praise.

Now I want to put this in the record. In working with Stephen Currier I also

worked with his public relations consultant, a man named Victor Weingarten from New York. Vic handled the business arrangements for Larry's consultancy. In some cases I would report back to Stephen directly, or in some cases to Vic about what Larry was doing, what Mrs. Johnson's reactions were, and the reactions of different members of the Committee. But here, on the twenty-first of October, I have the note of a lunch I had with Vic at the Hay-Adams, in which he told me a lot about the Curriers and how hard it was to grow up being rich. How Stephen's wife, Audrey Mellon Bruce Currier, used to hide on the floor of the limousine so people wouldn't see her because she was so embarrassed about being carried around as a girl in a limousine.

At any rate, this note says that Stephen would underwrite all of Larry's fees and would pledge up to a hundred thousand dollars that year, 1966. Who knows about next year, the sum could be much larger. And Stephen will make Victor's service available for fund raising for other projects that Stephen doesn't underwrite himself. In other words, at this point Larry's recommendations to Mrs. Johnson's committee were going to be underwritten substantially by Currier, or he would help do the fund raising to carry them out otherwise. Thus, his demise in February was a very, very major blow that, of course, no one could have foreseen. It was sad for the work of Mrs. Johnson's committee, as well as all the other reasons why it was sad.

Now, chronologically I'm looking at something else which I want to add here. I'll come back to the Halprin project. In November Halprin was back in Washington, and I took him over to see Secretary Udall. By this time Halprin had made sketches of a number of things, and he discussed these with Udall. Stewart reacted very favorably to them all. He suggested that we get together with Bob Weaver to do a demonstration cities application focusing on these environmental improvements. But I later learned that particular program wasn't set up to fund environmental open space improvements per se. There was an open space program in HUD and an urban beautification program, but demonstration cities was not the one to try to get help from.

M: This is what became known, ultimately, as the Model Cities Program?

F: Right. Then I introduced in the conversation an idea that Larry and I had discussed, that Mrs. Johnson do a television show of excellent examples of urban design and accomplishment throughout the country. Stewart lit up. "Don't go," he said, and he went on to say that he also had mentioned the possibility of Mrs. Johnson's doing a TV show to Liz and he thought that our idea was the right focus for it and the right way to handle it. He asked if Larry and I would do a joint memo to Liz about it and suggested we meet further with Mrs. Johnson. I'll come back to the television show, too. I hope it's not too awkward that I handle this chronologically.

M: No. In fact, taking up subjects is much better this way.

F: I was being interviewed, I can't remember by whom, but I made myself some notes in preparation for the interview. Maybe I'll quote some of these because in a way they're about me, but I think they're about the program as well, and it might be important to have them here. "Beautification. The term is evolving. I'm proud of it because I'm looking five years down the road at where we are going and where we can go." I was saying that in reaction to the fact that many people deprecated the term beautification. We all, I believe, suffered from the wrong word, and Mrs. Johnson asked us to use the word beautification as little as possible.

M: Do you know how that word had come about?

F: Liz should be asked that question. I'm not sure I do know.

This is about myself. "My specialty is the harmony of man and nature. A harmony from which we learn the truths of our own nature. I practice it in many ways: climbing mountains where one harmonizes one's movements with every nubbin or discoloration in the rock, working to preserve wilderness, because as a nation we must have it to retain our ecological and geographical balance; bringing man-made beauty of the highest order to cities and living spaces. It is only lack of imagination and will that has made cities places of blight and frustration. I have the highest confidence that urban man can do better than he's done in the recent past. This office of mine is a crossroads, a communication center, and it is a place where we uplevel every problem that comes to us. We cannot solve them all, but we can point people in the right direction."

"I am concerned with the quality of people's lives, the environment that is their context. Is it enhancing or is it depressing? Does it give vitality or bitterness? I ask myself the same question in new forms every week. To what extent does man mold his environment, and to what extent does his environment mold him?" That became written into some of her speeches later. "Our ability to do anything in this society is only as good as the people in power to do it. That is why Mrs. Johnson is so valuable. She is incredibly good, wise, and has a sure sense of how to follow through on her ideas. The strength of the beautification program is in its multiple nature. It is woven into dozens of agencies, into citizen efforts from the most humble to the most distinguished and affluent. The common thread that links them is the ageless quest of beauty and the continuing encouragement of Mrs. Johnson. She works with professionals of the highest competence. She works with children and laborers. Each and all know that she loves them and what they are doing."

Now I'm into something else. Walter Washington, twenty-first of November; I'm going to read most of this. "For several days I've been talking with Liz about

Walter, and she recommended to Mrs. Johnson that he be appointed by the President to replace either Walter Tobriner, retiring chairman of the three commissioners of the District of Columbia, or to replace Charles Horsky, presidential advisor on National Capital Affairs. In the Sunday paper there was a news announcement out of New York saying that Washington had accepted Mayor John Lindsay's offer of housing commissioner. However, this was neither confirmed by Lindsay or city hall or Walter. A real case of appointment by newspapers, say I. Its only authority was "sources close to city hall said that." I tried all day to reach Liz at the Ranch by telephone, but she did not return my call."

The background to this is that Walter told me that Lindsay was putting pressure on him to go to New York. "Simone Poulain, who was Liz's very able assistant, this morning perhaps explained why. She said that Walter had been very lax last week about the Dutch bulb planting ceremony. He had not been on time, and he had not briefed School Superintendent Hansen and other people properly. He seemed indifferent, and Simone said that Nash had bailed Walter out and really made the show run. She said she was tired of having Walter get the credit and Nash do the work, and that she told both Liz and Mrs. Johnson so. Marcia stood up for Walter. I didn't say much. It was after the fact. Except I did say that I would not give Walter jobs like that to do. His talents lay in other directions. He was superb at carrying beautification to the people, and that's something the Park Service never did do. I said that, too. It creates the scenario, but Walter takes beautification and Mrs. Johnson's programs into the hearts of the children of the neighborhoods."

Then I say what an irony that Walter, with his outstanding judgement, should have been out of focus on this small ceremony and unimpressed his friends at a critical moment when he needed to impress them. I asked Simone if she knew who was being considered to replace Charlie Horsky, and she said she didn't know. I pointed out to her how even though Horsky at times was abrasive and hadn't always had good relations on the Hill, he'd been very good in helping coordinate some of our beautification activities. This was something I had done. Charlie was a member of the Beautification Committee, and when things needed to be coordinated among a number of agencies of the city, I would discuss it with him. He would call a meeting in his office, and the agency representatives would come in and we'd work out the coordination. I was devastated when he left the White House and said, "What am I going to do?" He just said, "Oh, well you'll do it." So I took over that coordinating function among agencies, sort of wondering what I was doing initially, and then working into it very easily.

Now the next day I learn from Polly Shackleton that Walter had had a meeting with the President. This presumably was to discuss his appointment as chairman of the District commissioners, but it just hadn't gone very well. Later Walter told me also it hadn't gone very well, it was just one of those things, that they had not clicked.

This, you see, was over Thanksgiving, the twenty-second of November. Liz did call me back from the Ranch the next day, and she agreed thoroughly with my contention that the President should not lose Walter off of his team and let Lindsay snatch him away, and that Mrs. Johnson understood the need to have a man like Walter around. Liz said, "We've done all we can." So Walter Washington went to New York, and my attempts to get the President to keep him here were not successful. I sent Walter a little note the next day saying, "The only tangible farewell gift I have to give you is a wadded up, damp handkerchief, and I know that you know that the entire East Wing has been marching in your behalf. You have taught me the most important things I know about beautification in this city. It won't be the same, but we will carry on the best we can with the values you have set. Have a beautiful time in New York." Oh, and I also said, "Washington isn't ready for Washington, yet, but some day I hope we will be."

The thirtieth of November Mrs. Johnson had a lovely luncheon upstairs in the family dining room for the Committee for a More Beautiful Capitol. She had the meeting as a luncheon, and there were some absolutely choice things which I want to record. I was at Mrs. Johnson's table, as were Walter Washington, Adam Rumoshosky, Kay Graham, Steve Currier, Brooke Astor, Charlie Horsky, Rudy Kauffman and Cary Parker. It was also Mary Lasker's birthday, and we had a cake for her. Brooke Astor looked around the room at the French wallpaper and said, "Bird, is this the wallpaper I gave?" Stephen Currier, who is very up on things, said, "Yes, Brooke, it is." One of the things that always enchanted me was how philanthropists watched each other and knew what each other was doing, just the way the federal agencies watch each other. This was highly apparent within the committee. Very frequently they each carved out little areas of turf, and they didn't overlap. I really found that out after Stephen died and I tried to get money to carry out some of his projects from Laurance Rockefeller and Mary Lasker. I didn't talk to Laurance directly. I talked to Henry Diamond, who let it be known very clearly that, yes, Laurance certainly was going to do more on behalf of the committee, but he was going to select the things he did, and he might not have chosen Halprin necessarily. Just because Currier did he wouldn't necessarily, and he would choose his own thing.

M: Did you feel that this was one other aspect of their remaining independent in their philanthropic activities?.

F: Yes. That's right. Very much so. I respect it very much.

M: I meant independent from each other.

F: Yes.

M: That's a very unique thought to consider among that level of

F: Oh, this was funny. This was very funny at the same luncheon. This was Walter's first time back since being made housing commissioner in New York, and there were effusive tributes to him from all over the room, particularly from Mrs. Johnson. Mrs. Johnson's remarks, which I had drafted, sounded spontaneous and very much like her, while Udall's summary of our work to date, also my work, was flat-toned and rather awkward, some ad libbed and some my text. I said if he'd just rehearsed it once it would have been much better.

M: Were you, in effect, preparing the remarks for both of them?

F: Yes. Now one of Halprin's proposals, the major one, was that the about thirteen-hundred acres of Park Service-owned park land bordering the Anacostia River should be intensively developed into a city park very oriented toward the needs of the inner city people who abut it, but also designed of such high quality that people from all over the city, and indeed visitors and tourists, would want to come there for recreation. You wouldn't segregate it by third-class design and facilities, you would make it first-class. It would belong to the blacks most because it would be in their part of the city, but it would appeal to everyone. Libby Rowe was concerned about doing this. Her comments were that at this day and age in Washington the city just wasn't ready to integrate, and it would be too hard to get support on the Hill for the kind of money that would be needed to develop such a park. I made notes to myself: "Can't Mrs. Johnson's committee educate the city? I think the idea is worth throwing out by Halprin. Give people a chance to rally around it. Every week that passes, after all, the population gets younger, and youth really means integration, because the younger generation doesn't have that problem." But Libby was forewarning us of a real problem and a very important one.

On the ninth of December a lady who was doing a gardening project and had come to my office and wanted me to know about it, and wanted Mrs. Johnson to know about it--

M: This is still 1967?

F: 1966.

M: 1966.

F: Yes. She brought in Buckminster Fuller, really just as a courtesy to say hello. Also, this lady had thought he would be interested in some of the things we were doing in beautification. When she'd mentioned him once I said, "Oh, I'd love to meet him." She telephoned afterwards to say that as he left Bucky Fuller had said, "That gal

has a very keen mind." In a way, this is one of the nicest things that ever happened to me, because Bucky Fuller's mind is one of the truly keen minds. Whatever I said, if it led him at the end to say something that nice about me--this really warmed me, for many, many days.

The tenth of January Halprin was again in town. I took him over to see District Commissioners Mathe and Tobriner. They were both very, very enthusiastic about the proposals Halprin was developing. Tobriner said, "What can I do to help?" I said, "All you need to do is stand up in Mrs. Johnson's committee meeting when this is presented and say that the District government likes these things and is going to cooperate in all ways." He did do that. By this time Halprin had his report worked up far enough that he gave a preview to Stephen Currier, Carol Fortas, Libby Rowe, Stewart Udall and Mrs. Johnson that afternoon at five o'clock. The reason why Mrs. Johnson invited Carol Fortas to this was that she was treasurer of the Society for a More Beautiful National Capital, and the society was the fund raising arm. Now it never conducted, or has not yet, it still is in existence--it has never professionally conducted fund raising. And that is a profession. One of the things Currier was foreseeing was that he would provide the professional fund raising services to get the money, but the society was a very capable fund receiving and dispensing organization. The majority of the money [was] raised by Mary Lasker.

M: We were talking about the Halprin project?

F: Yes. Now Larry had also previewed it with Wolf von Eckhardt at the Occidental Restaurant, and Wolf was going to do extensive coverage on it. He invited Larry and me to dinner that evening at Ben Gilbert's, managing editor of the Post. "Larry previewed it all for Ben Gilbert, and this gave an opportunity for editorial compliments, which there were.

Tape 2 of 3

F: January 11 I took Larry Halprin over to see George Hartzog, Director of the National Park Service. Now I had gotten wind, how I no longer remember and I don't have it recorded, that as Larry began to look intensively at the Anacostia Park area the Park Service had gone through a bureaucratic flip and had quickly decided that they ought to have a plan for Anacostia Park. They had moved on the double and produced themselves a plan. Though a good effort, it wasn't quite in the league of the kinds of things that someone of Halprin's reputation and experience would do. But I wanted Larry to meet with George Hartzog and cool down that situation, because the lower levels of the Park Service were all set to have their own plan; ergo, the Halprin suggestions wouldn't be necessary.

I say there in my notes, "George was a model of decorum. He sucked and sucked his cigar and read Larry's report intently while we looked around the room." I told Stewart Udall later on that we'd avoided a confrontation with Hartzog. Apparently Hartzog had blown his stack earlier to Udall and said, "Why is Halprin messing around in my Anacostia Park?" But the meeting with Hartzog was a very good one, and it was very clear that George was very specifically looking at Halprin's suggestions. I surmised that he was going to relook at his own agency's plans in light of the work Halprin was doing, that he didn't have his mind closed by any means.

That afternoon Mrs. Johnson took Libby Rowe, Stewart Udall, Larry and me out in, my notes say a big black cigar, a car, a big one--oh, I'm sorry, I'm quoting Larry--to look at the various sites of proposals. The one that she thought was the most dramatic and the most exciting was part of the Anacostia Park proposal. There's an island behind D.C. Stadium in the Anacostia River. You don't realize it's an island, really, unless you look awfully carefully as you cross Benning Street bridge or East Capitol Street bridge. But it is an island of about thirty-five acres. Larry's suggestion was that that be developed as a Tivoli kind of park--not a Danish park, but an American equivalent of Tivoli. But really an exciting place by day and by night; some amusements, some culture, some sports, [a] combination of attractive amenities and facilities.

The subway, which we still have to get in Washington, has a proposed stop there by D.C. Stadium. Larry had looked into the situation enough to know that while inevitably, of course, the Highway Department had a freeway proposed up the edge of the river, Larry felt that that planning was still sufficiently early that the freeway could be rerouted or modified in some way so it wouldn't cut the city off from the river bank and this recreation facility could be developed. The island is called Kingman Island, and it's separated from the western shore of the river by only a very small channel. The Halprin report further said that small barrier dams could be constructed and that Kingman Lake could be pumped out, water purified, lining made, and a great swimming lake could be made there right in the heart of the inner city equivalent to several hundred swimming pools in size. This was really the piece de resistance of his report and recommendations.

M: This was between the banks and the river?

F: Yes.

M: I mean and the island?

F: Yes.

M: The island and the river bank?

F: Yes. Libby Rowe came, and one of the reasons why Mrs. Johnson invited her was I told Mrs. Johnson about Libby's concerns of the integration problem and whether we could really get support for such an expensive facility in the inner city. Of course, I'm the kind of person who'll try anything if I feel it's right, I think it's worth working for. Libby kept trying to say how the far right wouldn't approve of such a facility and the far left wouldn't approve of it, and I finally rebutted her in the car. I could tell Mrs. Johnson was listening and agreeing with what I was saying. She was nodding up and down. We were standing out there then looking at the island, and Stewart said, "Lib, I just don't agree with you, but it's too much to go into here." Later he and I walked off to the car, and he said, "Hell, if Libby is right that means that American society cannot integrate. On the other hand, if we build this park I think we're going to integrate ten years sooner."

Well, the meeting of the Committee for a More Beautiful Capitol at which Larry's report was presented took place on the twelfth of January. I had worked in bringing him in contact with all the various committee members who should be involved and building as strong bridges for him as possible, not only with those agencies that had information that would be valuable to him but also who would have responsibility for carrying out recommendations. Frankly, I worked on some of the writing of his report with him, too. Because he announced that designers weren't writers, and it would be very helpful to him to have a writer do some work on it. I was sufficiently involved in it that I was only too glad to do so.

The reception at the committee meeting was absolutely outstanding. Mrs. Johnson's comments, and of course these are in the minutes but as long as I'm on the subject, [were] that "This is a most exciting presentation. I hope all of you will study it earnestly and see what it can mean for our city." Then she spoke of the difficulty of getting funds from Congress for anything that the administration wanted to do and how hard her husband had to work to get the four congressmen who put Model Cities across. The implication was, "How much can we do without having to bother Congress?"

Victor Gruen spoke very eloquently in support of the various recommendations. He said, "When you look at the budget of these things, you have to do it over a period of time and compare the cost of making these improvements throughout residential neighborhoods, small parks and street repairs and planting trees and really upgrading the physical surfaces and amenities in residential neighborhoods. He said, "You have to compare the budget that you'll spend now compared to the costs of having to completely renew those neighborhoods five or ten years from now if you let them continue to deteriorate." He said, "That's the true cost, not just the cost of the improvements now. These are not luxuries."

Now we're going to go on to the subject of highway beautification for a minute. The next day Mrs. Johnson asked me to come up at one o'clock, and I didn't know what was on her mind. Liz came roaring in a few minutes beforehand and said we were going to talk to the President about highway beautification.

You were going to ask me about highway beautification earlier, and I barged ahead on to these other things. It goes back to the White House Conference on National Beauty in May of 1965. There were several panels at the conference which dealt with highways and freeways. There was one that dealt with beautification. There was one that dealt with the routing and design of freeways. Those are the two I remember. I had not been involved in the planning or preparation of the conference. Henry Diamond worked on it very much. Bill Moyers worked on it. I was much too new at the White House, and my feet weren't really under me. I attended it with Mrs. Johnson, as well as all the sessions she did not go to, but I wasn't involved in the operation of it.

But the decision was made somehow, the final day when the group came over to the White House for a reception with the President, that he would already announce that he was implementing some of their recommendations. A major one he chose to recommend was highway beautification. I don't know in detail how that act was drafted or who worked on it. I only know that in working out its provisions Bill Moyers met with Phil Tocker of the Outdoor Advertisers of America, the lobby group against highway beautification, and attempted to see how much of a beautification act we could get without their trying to shoot it down. So the act that the White House sent up to the Hill in order to apprehend and stave off opposition from the outdoor advertisers was much weaker than the highway beautification panel of the White House Conference on Natural Beauty would have wanted. When those people heard what the President was sending up to the Hill, they didn't exactly react that he'd given them all that great a gift. This was one of those strategic problems which plagued us, and I think still does.

In August of 1965 I was taking a long planned family vacation with my husband and child down to the Southwest--Grand Canyon, Santa Fe, Indian country, Udall's country which I'd never seen before. Highway beautification was coming up for hearings, and positions were hardening on both sides. I remember having a long talk with Liz before I left, as we watched the positions hardening and the opposition developing among our friends as well as the foes of it, saying I thought that we should not push this legislation, per se. We should introduce it and then let the hearing process work its will on it. Because I thought that the supporters of highway beautification would come in with much stronger measures. If the committee process just strung out through the fall and we didn't try to push for one thing or another, by next session we'd be able to get a stronger bill introduced and be on our way to getting what we wanted.

Well, certainly Liz disagreed with that because she wanted immediate results from Congress. Others may well have, too. What Mrs. Johnson's feelings were I don't know because I didn't discuss this with her. But I was in daily telephone touch with Cynthia from gas stations across the country as we made our trip. Cynthia said that the White House was making an all-out push for that piece of legislation, and that was that. I mean I'd made my recommendation and had my say. I might have been right and I might have been wrong. I don't know.

M: Did you get back in time to participate in any of the activities on the bill?

F: No.

M: There was a great outcry, particularly from the Republicans, and the pressure from the White House on the bill.

F: That's right. There was a congressional dinner at the White House that night, and the members were informed that they really wouldn't be welcome at the dinner until they passed Lady Bird's bill. No, I don't think it was handled appropriately and well, and I think many potential friends and supporters didn't like the strong-arm tactics. Nor do I really think they were a fair reflection of Mrs. Johnson. She was either badly advised or an awful lot of this went on without her knowledge.

M: How did it become associated, become named Lady Bird's bill?

F: I don't know. But that's fairly obvious; it would happen very easily, I think. I do remember when I was going through the files sending them down to Archives and I read the files of this period carefully because I hadn't been there, there was a marvelous memo from Liz to Mrs. Johnson talking about how on this particular day she'd put on her tightest corset, her Joy perfume and tromped up on the Hill to see such-and-such and so-and-so.

M: Do you think the fact that this was sort of a compromise bill was in part the reason that Mr. Johnson in signing it indicated that--

F: Yes. Yes, definitely. I was back for the signing and contributed to his statement, worked on his statement for the signing ceremony. Absolutely. But I'll tell you, and I really want to say this because I believe it strongly and then I'll contradict myself, by strong-arm tactics we really alienated the supporters, the conservationists who would have been behind that legislation if we hadn't been so outspoken in favor of a fairly weak bill to start with. If we'd let them take the advocacy of a stronger bill and let them go out and run it in front, and we backed them, they would have been much happier. We would have had a stronger bill, I think. But then you can always argue, "But if you don't put your muscle where your mouth is, you may never get anything."

That's also true.

Okay. January, 1967. This meeting was to be with the President about what amendments or modifications we ought to send up, because one of the provisions of the 1965 act was that the President was to submit implementing provisions to Congress. Well, I called Henry Diamond and solicited his advice. I'd called people at the Conservation Foundation and solicited their advice, and we were in agreement on the strengthening amendments that would be desirable. Liz and I went up to see Mrs. Johnson, and the three of us talked about the legislation. Secretary Alan Boyd of Transportation had sent over a long memorandum to Mrs. Johnson in which he described the implementation of the act to date and what he thought was necessary, his evaluation of strengthening amendments and their chances, and what the opposition was likely to do.

M: The real hurdle of this was enforcement.

F: Exactly. The hurdle was that the legislation said the federal government will pay billboard owners all along the interstate and primary system to remove their billboards. Seven states and the states in which there were active citizen roadside councils, anti-billboard pro-beautification, all had been taking them down under police powers. This had been upheld in the state supreme courts of several, including Washington State. They finally, as we negotiated and I particularly negotiated with them, would have been willing to have legislation saying compensation can be paid, but not to make compensation a requirement of the legislation. The administration felt it was necessary to have compensation in order to get the other forty-plus states to do anything at all.

M: And to assuage the cry from small businesses?

F: Precisely. I think Secretary Boyd would disagree with me in what I'm going to say, but I don't think the administration ever really faced up to the budgetary implications of half a billion dollars paid to take down billboards around the country. This was swallowed, and everyone looked the other way and we advocated our legislation. It was pretty expensive.

M: Was there an attempt in these amendments that you were talking about in January of 1967 to introduce this idea of can instead of will?

F: Yes . Now Liz and I talked with Mike Manatos, because he was coordinating on the President's side discussions and strategy of what we might do. He was advocating, or picking up the position, that a man named Dick Royce of the Senate committee staff thought was appropriate. Well, Royce worked for Senator Jennings Randolph. Randolph, by and large, was beholden to the billboard lobby and

certainly wasn't at this point our friend in the legislation.

M: Didn't he manage the bill?

F: Well, eventually. But still he wasn't going to take a strong position on it. Then, upstairs again in the afternoon with Mrs. Johnson, Alan Boyd came over; his under secretary, a man named Hutchinson; Lowell Bridwell, who was designated federal highway administrator, not confirmed as yet; and Frank Turner, who was designated head of the Bureau of Public Roads. He now was Volpe's federal highway administrator. Turner is an old-time roadbuilder who has come up through the bureau. Bridwell was a crusading journalist who came in as part of the administration to the Transportation Department and then was put over the highway program.

M: Let me just stop to ask you; you're very well versed on these people, is that part of your procedure, to find out about the people involved?

F: Yes. Yes. There was a conversation about the legislation, and Mrs. Johnson spoke very eloquently to these men about her hopes and convictions, that even if they just had a little money they would spend it well and carefully and thoughtfully; and that under the landscaping provision, that she in a way cared much more about than the billboard one, the monies appropriated for landscaping be well spent; and that natural plantings and natural materials be used so they wouldn't be costly to maintain; and that they look to make demonstrations in each state with the landscaping program of what highway beautification could accomplish. It was her feeling that when people began to see those landscaping improvements they would credit highway beautification, and then they would become supporters of the whole program, including billboard removal. But this was her sense of how things ought to be carried out.

We were sitting in the Yellow Room upstairs, then the President came in. He used this as an opportunity to talk with really all of these quite new appointees--the Department of Transportation wasn't that old--and these highway appointees, to really goose them along and motivate them. He used anecdotes from his own long past to convey the message to those others in the room. He talked about one of the first fights he remembered between advocates of power lines and some five hundred year old oak trees. Frankly, I don't remember the whole anecdote, but the punch line was, "There is only one thing worse than a dumb lawyer, and that's a smart engineer." Then he said, "I don't mean to knock your profession, Mr. Turner, but we all know that there's more to good roads than laying a straight line." Turner swallowed, and then he spoke of his great personal commitment to beautification and said it was going to get a hundred per cent of his attention.

Then he [Johnson] told Alan to lay on some bright ex-congressmen to do lobbying up on the Hill for him, because we needed better spokesmen and better groundwork on the Hill. He recommended that the department establish an awards program to really get the grassroots, get publicity out for highway beautification. He said, "If we don't do this, all the women in the country will be on our backs, with Lady Bird first." I remember walking out of the meeting with Alan Boyd and walking down the staircase and into the foyer together, and he said, "Gee, I'm glad he said that about putting ex-congressmen on the staff. I wonder how many slots he'll give me?" I said, "Well, I'm sure the sky's the limit. Why don't you just do it?"

Oh, this was a few days later. Liz asked me what I'd thought of last week's meeting with the President. "That's what I love about Lyndon," she said, "he really shook those slow bureaucrats and told them to get cracking." Then she said, "Let's get an awards ceremony going and have a White House ceremony and make sure that idea of the President's doesn't drop. Let's do it. Let's schedule it. Let's put in on the calendar. I don't care how they're chosen. Let's get photographs in, even if it's a put-up job, we just want to get coverage and impress Congress. We're going to have a ceremony." So I had my marching orders to lay on a beautification awards ceremony for highway beautification.

M: This is presubmission of any amendments, right?

F: Right.

M: You're setting the stage?

F: Right. Yes. We're going to invite a lot of members of Congress. But I figured we wouldn't just grab some photographs and give them awards, but we darned well better get very good judges and make sure that what was selected and the criteria would stand up to all the attention and scrutiny that they would obviously get. So I spent many days with some of the troglodytes of the Bureau of Public Roads getting them to set up the program. I won't go into that. It's too painful.

That afternoon we had a planning session in the Library with Jane Freeman, Trudye Fowler, Marvella Bayh and Lorraine Cooper on the beautification panel that they were going to do for the congressional wives' party, the party Mrs. Johnson was having for congressional wives. They were going to be on a panel. My personal journal comments: "Lorraine is incredibly bright and witty in the best sense; Jane is very organized and straight; Marvella comes on as being slightly dumb, but she rallies; Trudye is wrapped up in herself to a terrible degree. She talks, but she doesn't hear." I don't know what all that means.

Now, on implementation of Halprin programs: One of his other main

recommendations was that interior blocks be developed as recreation space. In the older areas of the city, particularly Capitol East, and his main study area was Capitol East, you drive into the alleys behind the houses and you find large spaces. There used to be alley dwellings in there. If you remember Eleanor Roosevelt and her crusade to get rid of alley dwellings, there were shacks and shanties in those back alleys. They go back to the days when there were carriage houses. The row houses in front had carriage houses in behind. They are huge areas. There are many up in Northwest One and Shaw which are, oh, several hundred feet in both dimensions.

M: All the houses backing on to them, in other words?

F: Yes, yes. They'll be full of rubble and junk and cars, and someone'll have a body shop there and just ruffraff, garbage, lots and lots of garbage. One of Larry's discoveries was this space, and why not really make it dynamic and attractive, he asked. You could even go so far as to have coffee shops or galleries or other kinds of things, depending on the neighborhoods; you could [have] car washes, laundromats. You could even have little commercial activities there, but you could certainly have recreation space. This was a very, very well received concept, and it was agreed by Mrs. Johnson's committee to try to seek HUD urban beautification 90 per cent demonstration funding to do some of these.

Meanwhile, to the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, and this goes back some months. Remember I mentioned Capper Public Housing, the towers with the space in the middle? The very capable design team that had worked on the design for Buchanan Plaza, which Brooke Astor paid for, had also gratuitously done a design for Capper and what they would do in that space, a marvelous plan which included a ball field, a gym, a pool, delicatessen, laundromat, drug store, little shops and plaza and a great outdoor activity community facility area. They'd done this as a design concept, not with participation on the part of the community, but just to show what could be done, really, and then see what people did. All of us, Mrs. Johnson particularly, were really thrilled about this. Then the question came, "Well, how do you fund that? Because that's going to be a two or three million dollar project." Let me say something else about funding.

The District received 50 per cent urban beautification money from HUD, which it spent on beautification, matched, then, by funds and donations. I was always concerned that that money wasn't spent as creatively and imaginatively as it should have been spent. I never succeeded in getting anything particularly done about my concern. The decisions on how to spend it were made by an interagency task force of the various District of Columbia agencies who were involved. Members of the committee would each submit their budget proposals of what they'd like to do, how much matching money they could put up. Then when HUD would

decide how much money the city could have the committee would sit around and carve up the pie. There was going to be \$425,000 available; all right, each of us cuts back this per cent. No one exercised discretionary judgment on whether the plan of this agency was well drawn up, well conceived. No one evaluated past years' expenditures to see whether the money had just melted off into the soil and vanished or whether there were still results that could be seen.

This always bothered me enormously, because so much money was wasted, so much really went down rat holes. In this sense the Park Service spent its money very well, because it had real maintenance crews. But D.C. Schools, Public Housing, Recreation Department were all stepchildren of the Highway Department for maintenance. Sometimes things would get maintained and taken care of, and sometimes they wouldn't. Also, the bureaucrats would inevitably make some kind of decision of, say, "We're going to have fifty thousand dollars to put landscaping in a public housing." Rather than putting all the fifty thousand at one place and really doing a major investment, making a major park area there, they'd dribble it, two or three thousand here and there, a bush, a bulb, scattering it all around. It would get run over and trampled and gone. I did get invited to the interagency committee once; I was not on it. But I had no power to change the procedures that they'd worked out among themselves.

Well anyway now, the Beautification Committee had agreed, really a task force of it that Charlie Horsky chaired on how to implement the Halprin plan had agreed to go to HUD for 90 per cent demonstration money to fund interior blocks. Meanwhile, either Nash or Mary Lasker, and at this point they were working very closely together and sometimes I don't know which was which, but one or the other of them had thought, "Really, maybe what we ought to do is have Capper funded by the 90 per cent demonstration money." I had gone over to HUD and discussed all of the Halprin recommendations plus Capper, which we also wanted to do, with Charles Haar, assistant secretary, and Dwight Reddy, in charge of open space and beautification, and asked their advice on how we ought to fund these.

M: Could I stop you, Miss Francis? Were you able to get funds from the urban beautification allotment for the District through that, or is this beside that?

F: Well, they had a demonstration program that was 90 per cent funding for projects of an unusual dimensions.

M: But those monies that the interagency was dispensing?

F: These would be in addition to.

M: I didn't quite understand.

F: But now, Reddy and Harr advised that we couldn't fund both Capper and interior blocks out of the 90 per cent demonstration money, that of the 90 per cent demonstration money they maybe could make about a million dollars available to the city of Washington, if they were lucky. A million dollars on Capper still wouldn't touch it, really, but a million dollars would do maybe half a dozen interior blocks. They advised that we try to fund Capper out of the regular 50 per cent program and try to get philanthropic donations for it, and do Capper phasing it over a period of several years in order to cover the total cost. A number of the facilities in Capper, when I say it was a two to three million dollar project, the commercial facilities and recreation buildings would still come out of other budgets than beautification.

M: Was the recommendation that you spoke of accepted, to take on the interior blocks?

F: What happened was that Mary Lasker wanted to pursue the question of getting HUD to fund Capper, and she arranged a dinner for Charles Harr and his wife and Nash Castro and me at a hotel. She, I think, hoped Harr would commit himself that night at that dinner to funding Capper out of 90 per cent money. Harr very graciously did not commit himself, because I think he felt this wasn't the best way to do it. I don't know whether she knew that he wasn't committing himself or not, because she was selling very hard, and he was just being gracious as could be but just sliding away. I might say that we were all in a bind of having too many expensive recommendations before us to be able to cope with.

Another sidelight on the seventeenth of January which I want to put in: at five o'clock Liz and I went upstairs to meet with Mrs. Johnson and Joan Crawford. Miss Crawford had a major position with Pepsi-Cola. Is she on the board, or chairman of the Board? I'm not sure what it is.

M: She's chairman now, I think.

F: Yes. She wanted to tell Mrs. Johnson of some anti-litter TV spots that Pepsi-Cola was going to do, that she would be on them, and she wanted Mrs. Johnson to be on them. Mrs. Johnson demurred a little bit about going on Pepsi-Cola's anti-litter TV spots. The President came bouncing in. He'd bought a new Salinas painting, and he was showing it to Mrs. Johnson and to Miss Crawford, asking everyone's opinion about it and sort of orbiting around with this painting. He was going to put it in his room and put the one that was in there in Mrs. Johnson's room--very delightful. He sort of turned at me and said, "How are you coming with that highway program?" I said I thought we were making progress, and he wanted to know that. Liz was very tactful in suggesting to Miss Crawford that Pepsi-Cola might want to consider in addition to its anti-litter ads that it might want to consider doing something like a teen park in some city, or in several cities or in Washington.

M: A what?

F: A teen park, a park for teenagers. They might dispense Pepsi-Cola there, but a place for young people. Then I made this comment about Miss Crawford: "Aged but lovely, regal and exciting. Mrs. Johnson and Miss Crawford were speaking like two queens." Mrs. Johnson said of Carol Channing, "She manufactures vitamins, throws off sparks of excitement." They both had high praises for Mary Martin and for the Lunts. "Miss Crawford is alive with theater glow herself, even though her flesh has lost its firm." She was very gracious to both Liz and me, which I thought were the marks of a lady.

Now, through Charlie Horsky's good offices he arranged a meeting with Commissioner Mathe of the District, with Tom Airis, head of the Highway Department, this is all at my instigation but he did it, to discuss this freeway going up the Anacostia River. Could something be done about its design so that a recreation park could come into being? The District people said if the Park Service intended to hire Halprin as a consultant to develop, really develop plans for the park, they would be glad to hire him as a consultant to develop plans for the freeway, which was very pleasing. We brought them to that point, I might say, with a little bit of work. I said to Airis that I'd been reading so much anti-freeway news in the press, and it occurred to me that maybe if he hired a designer like Halprin and maybe had his freeway, tunneled or decked or designed it in such a way that it harmonized with the fabric of the city a little better, that he might get some better press than he'd had. I'm not really sure he liked that too much.

This was the day that Stephen and Aubrey Currier's plane was reported down in the Caribbean. Vic Weingarten called and told us about it. I talked to Mrs. Johnson. She sent telegrams to the mothers of both Audrey and Stephen. She also saw to it that all possible search was undertaken, all over the Caribbean. I was told by Jane Lee Eddy a few days later when the search was finally called off that everyone knew that it was Mrs. Johnson that had sent the fleet out to look for the plane.

Mc: She just, in other words, immediately went through the West Wing and involved the administration.

F: Yes. I presume she called the military aide.

Let's see. Oh, twentieth of January, I'm complaining to myself. "I foresee that I may have to figure out the strategy for the administration's position on the Highway Beautification Act, because if I don't no one else will." I also had lunch with Polly Shackleton at the International Club. She was being recommended as a D.C. commissioner. I must say she certainly didn't say it, and would be too much of a

lady to ask for support. But I think she was telling me this because she wanted me to know and Mrs. Johnson to know, and if there was any disposition to support her with the President [she would welcome it]. And it was done, I might say. I did put my oar in and help.

Interestingly, during this period I was in touch with Walter Washington even though he was in New York. He called in through me to keep in touch with Washington. Now, he may well have had other contacts in the city, too, but certainly--with Mrs. Johnson and her committee and the Halprin report which he was very close to--he kept in touch with me. We had a long talk about Currier. He gave me a number of pieces of advice. He said he was very strongly in favor of Kingman Lake and that park and had some advice on how to get Hartzog to support Halprin rather than going ahead with the park plan minus Halprin.

Apparently the Park Service was still cooking up their own plan for Anacostia, and they wanted Udall, as their man on Mrs. Johnson's committee, to come in with this plan to the next committee meeting as their idea. I discussed this with Walter on the phone, and he said, "Look, if Udall comes in with a Hartzog plan everybody's going to say, 'But what about the Halprin plan?' The Hartzog one won't be as good; it'll look really inferior." "And," he said, "wouldn't Udall look a lot better if he comes into the meeting in February and says, 'Since the last meeting we've put Larry on contract. He and the Park Service are going to work this, develop this together. These and these steps have been taken.'" I told Walter that we'd been looking for someone to replace him on the committee, which is true. We did look for someone to replace that sole voice. We'd come up with a list of six people, and this still wasn't enough. He said he really wanted to stay on the committee if Mrs. Johnson wouldn't mind having him as a commuter from New York, which she thought was marvelous. She was just delighted.

There was an event that really just enchanted me no end. Some time in November or December a vice president of the Reliance Insurance Company in Philadelphia had written Mrs. Johnson saying the firm was about to celebrate their hundredth anniversary. Rather than give everybody a watch or a certificate or a glob of something, they thought of the idea of planting trees and wondered about her reaction to this. Could they discuss this with her? Well, this led to many meetings between this vice president and me and their public relations consultant to work out what their program was. We thought it was just glorious. It ended up to be planting of trees in one hundred cities across the United States at ghetto schools.

The local Reliance Insurance man would contact the school and work out the selection of the school with the school board, and then a good, hefty tree that would last was selected and ceremonies [held]. The children participated, and there were school lessons about trees. It was really a lovely thing. In Washington they kicked it

off the twenty-fourth of January with a party out at the Arboretum. Mrs. Freeman presided, and the president of Reliance Insurance Company came down. In fact they had a railroad car that came down from Philadelphia with Reliance executives. Trees were planted out at Scott Montgomery School. We had little third graders who spoke, and the principal of the school spoke. It was just one of those warm, warm wonderful meetings.

After that I went with the Freemans to the National Wildlife Federation annual banquet at the Statler. I was at the head table and sat beside Senator Bible. We talked about the pig war site on San Juan Island, which was up for a national historic monument in Washington State, a little war we had with the British that most people don't know about. We talked about the North Cascades at great length, and since he's chairman of the National Parks Subcommittee, why this was a good evening's work. Then in my notes I say, "Senator Paul Douglas and a little battle-axe in an orange dress and sneakers were honored for saving the Indiana dunes. She was really a marvelous little battle-axe, but she did have the face of one. He got a standing ovation as well he might. Freeman was master of ceremonies. Udall gave the main brief address. He was at his loveliest and quoted the marvelous introduction of Leaves of Grass in which Whitman talks about the perception of beauty. Tom Kimball really puts on a good show: army band, presentation of the colors, deliciously tender filet mignon, quite a show."

My goodness, I was writing a great deal on this day. Oh, yes! In maybe late December or early January I had met with representatives of the League of Cities, the Association of Counties, Conference of Mayors, and a number of major conservation groups and asked for their suggestions or ideas of things Mrs. Johnson might do that would come to them. I said that she was active; she was interested in whatever suggestions they had. John Gunther of the U.S. Conference of Mayors had come back to me very quickly and said that on the twenty-sixth of January the Conference of Mayors, and this is their executive group, about forty of them from the biggest cities, would be in town for the day for a briefing session with the Vice President on programs. He just wanted me to know that.

Well, I put two and two together and thought it would be great for Mrs. Johnson to invite these mayors over for a chat at the end of the day, [so they could] bring her up to date on what was happening in their cities in beautification. She could give them a pep talk, tell them about some of the things she'd been doing. So the Vice President brought the group over from EOB across the lawn, and Mrs. Johnson in a long sleeved off-white silk dress had her picture taken with them on the Portico steps. Then we all went up to the Oval Room, Mrs. Johnson on the arm of an aide and me with Dick Lee of New Haven talking about Tom Appleby, who was our renewal director in the city of Washington and used to work for Lee in New Haven. Cocktails were served, and each had a chance to chat with Mrs. Johnson.

I introduced myself to Mayor Collins of Boston in a wheelchair. He seemed surprised that I didn't know him by his condition. He told me he believed strongly in design competitions and had one for a major new building as well as for the redesign of Copley Square, which Sasaki will do. I had an amusing exchange with Lee, a Yale, and the St. Petersburg, Florida mayor who hails from Harvard. I was saying I'd always enjoyed my dates in New Haven, and the St. Petersburg mayor objected. So I consoled him and said I'd married a Harvard man. To which he replied that they never minded having a little of the groundwork done by Yalies. I decided to find an excuse to get away. Then we set up chairs in the Red Room. What really happens at White House parties!

The Red Room is very small, and by the time you have forty mayors in there and Mrs. Johnson--Cynthia and I were both there. Cynthia was taking notes. I'm sure Liz was there, I don't remember at the moment, but she must have been. Mrs. Johnson made her opening remarks delightfully and warmly. Only Liz and I would have known that they were not spontaneous. Mayor Cavanaugh of Detroit presided, and then each one of a prechosen group of mayors told a few examples of beautification accomplishments from their cities. Lindsay was low-key and modest and needed a haircut. He told of the effort to find new uses for old landmark buildings. Cavanaugh said he used the local chapter of the AIA as a design review board for every new public building. Cervantes talked about the Arch in St. Louis. It was designed by Aarne Saarinen, and he called it a Ceasarean arch, which broke me up.

Schrunk of Portland said they had been fighting the Bureau of Public Roads on the design of a freeway down the Willamette River. Then he said, "Mercifully, the President gave a speech about highway beauty," and this was when he actually signed the highway beautification plan. So Schrunk said he was able to quote that speech to the highway engineers. A few days later Humphrey happened to be out, and he took Humphrey on a motorcade along the route where this freeway was to go. He felt both of those materially improved his bargaining position with the Bureau of Public Roads engineers.

At that moment, just, you know, presto, the President walked in the room, just as Schrunk had been praising him. He just sat down and asked Schrunk to go on and finish, which was very hard on Schrunk. Then Lee was the last person, of New Haven, scheduled. He in many ways was the most eloquent and easiest for the President to sit through. He told how they'd been rehabilitating old houses in New Haven so the poor could still live in them. Then the President unfurled into one of his great talks about politics and Congress. What I'm saying now is semi-quotations from him, because I wrote this down within an hour after he spoke.

He doubts whether there are four of the twenty-eight major committee

chairmen who would vote for urban programs. He said he was sorry to see a Republican mayor elected in New York. Why? Because he'd wanted John Lindsay to stay in the Congress. He'd voted for good things. Could Lindsay go home tonight to New York or Tate go home to Philadelphia and know they could deliver that city's entire delegation for a Model Cities bill? "Well, you'd better figure out how to do it. I have them over to breakfast. I talk with them all the time, but I'm just one man. I cannot do it alone." If their constituents and voters back home aren't telling them what America wants, they won't deliver it.

"The Senate is all right, but in the House we still don't have one-man one-vote. Those southern congressmen are always looking for a Nevada man they can trade a civil rights vote with. I'm not saying you should make a trade like that, but I'm saying that you have to round up the support for urban measures if you want anything out of this Congress. I know that four million dollars is nothing for Model Cities. You need four hundred million, or maybe four hundred billion, but we have to get our nose under the tent. We have to start. If we can't get four million, we sure as hell can't get more."

Then he told a wonderful anecdote about the Australian Prime Minister and his preacher which had everyone on the edge of their chairs. They finally gave a standing ovation when the punch line came. The President was grand, tough, impassioned, impressive. As he came out of the door to the room, I was behind some of the mayors. They were shaking his hand, and he reached right across them and grabbed mine and said, "You're doing a good job, keep it up."

Parenthetically, his speaking to them about getting enough money from Model Cities. Cavanaugh and Lindsay and some of the others had been testifying before Congress, saying "This administration request is just a pittance. It's nothing." So he was explaining to them why he wanted to get his nose under the tent. In many ways that was one of the best performances I have ever seen him do. I walked out of the White House and up the street with John Lindsay, who was going over to the Hay-Adams, and he wanted to talk to me about the freeway he was fighting on Staten Island. I walked out with him, and he was very impressed with the President. He said, "I don't think I agree with him on everything, but I agree with him on this completely. We can't deliver the votes."

M: Were you forewarned that the President was going to be coming to this meeting?

F: No, I wasn't. I did not set up with him in mind. I set it up for her.

Ah ha! The thirty-first of January Charley Horsky and I went over to George Hartzog's office to talk about Anacostia Park. I said it was some of the slipperiest ice skating I've done for a long time. George had sandwiches. Sutton Jett, who

was head of the National Capitol Region at that time, and their designers and landscape architects [were there]. I talked about Larry's presentation at Mrs. Johnson's Committee and told them that Mrs. Johnson had thought over what Libby Rowe had said, that this was too expensive and shouldn't be done, and that she really trusted Larry Halprin's ability and felt it was worth doing. It would have her backing and support.

She had asked me about the Highway Department and whether we could trust them. I had told her Commissioner Mathe was with us, and the Highway Department had effectively said, "If the Park Service will put Halprin on contract, we will, too, to design the two things together." Then we got into a very interesting discussion on some of the differences between what the Park Service had recommended and what Larry was recommending. George began asking very penetrating questions, and he began seeing that the Halprin design offered a lot more than what his own people [offered].

I said that I didn't think it would be to anyone's advantage to have two separate plans, and particularly to let them both get up before Mrs. Johnson's committee for the same area. That didn't seem to make sense. But maybe in staff rooms like this one we could bring the two together. George agreed. Horsky began knitting everyone in the room together, and he started off by asking George what he would do at this point. George hurumphed and hurumphed, and he started off by saying he always thought Halprin should be a consultant to the Highway Department, not just on that road but on a number of others, too.

They needed someone like that. After all, "They're rich as Croesus, and I'm just struggling for enough money to water my flowers." Then I said, well, did he think Halprin ought to work on the freeway and not on the Park? "Oh," he said, "of course not. He has to look at the whole thing. You can't just take out a piece of it and look at that. You can't take it out of its context," said George. So it was agreed that Horsky would draft a letter to Halprin clearing it with both Hartzog and Mathe, inviting him to work on both the freeway and the Park.

Then later that day--apparently, I had developed a proposal for a highway awards program--Liz called me in and said the President had looked it over, approved it, and said, "Well, we're really in this business now." I had worked out the program to make sure that the categories didn't just include landscaping but also included design of freeways, because I knew there was a lot of interest in that subject. Vic Weingarten came in and told me of a lot of the aftermath of the Currier death and all the bees that were buzzing in to get some piece of the estate. Virginia, New York and Vermont were all competing for jurisdiction over the inheritance.

A few things about Currier. His assets included Kinlock, their farm out in The Plains of Virginia, it employs one hundred-forty people; a horse farm in Vermont; a schooner under construction; another schooner with a crew of two; a flat being remodeled on Park Avenue. They had undertaken to send four of the farm children through college. There are thirty-two boys at Harvard on full anonymous scholarships underwritten by Currier. He secretly had underwritten the program to acquire American paintings and sculpture for thirty-five museums, an annual acquisition for each of these museums. He'd put two hundred thousand dollars into the first Mississippi sit-in. Vic had been sent down to talk with the organizers there. He'd asked them a lot of questions about liability and how they were going to protect the Northern kids who would come down, and finally one of the blacks looked at Weingarten and said, "Listen, we don't need your advice, Mr. Weingarten. We want your money." So Vic had come back to New York and reported this to Steve, who had said, "All right, let's give them the money." Vic said that was the kind of man Currier was.

M: Were you aware of all these involvements?

F: No. That's why I am recording it at this point, because I was just learning about it.

I asked Vic three questions. Oh, let me say something about the estate. The arrangement with Taconic Foundation, which was set up by Currier, was that it received sort of any amount of money from Currier. Last year it spent about three million. So far this year it had received about three-quarters of a million. But one of the things that had to be worked out in the estate now was whether it would receive more during that year or not, and then what the rest of the terms would be. The three children would inherit all the fortune. I remember, and I don't think I have it written down here, but Stephen and Audrey together had a spending income of ten million a year which they had to spend.

I asked Vic three questions because there had been correspondence between him and me on the next steps that would be undertaken after that Halprin report. I asked could we have further designs service on Halprin's part for the next three months? Could we hope for further design work through 1967? Were there any conditions under which Vic's own services for fund raising could be available to us? On the last point Victor said he would consider it. He knows that Stephen intended to provide him to raise the money for the whole package. But of course money raising was much easier in the days when Stephen himself was there to pick up the phone and call Paul Mellon. Vic does not have that kind of access. "Sure, I can raise money and do it," he said, "but it's harder on my own."

Incidentally, I want to add one interesting thing for the record, too. Victor said Stephen had no monuments, no buildings, that it was only a quarter of a public

school in Vermont which he was sponsoring, and these beautification projects. He did have one idea of a piece of land that he wanted to acquire and put a building on. That's the piece of land on 18th and E, kitty-cornered from the Department of Interior at the end of Rawlins Park. Because when you come up from the E Street Expressway, look across Rawlins Park and this piece of land has a stunning location. Demolition is going on there right now.

M: It's New York Avenue and E, too, isn't it?

F: Yes, and New York Avenue comes in there too.

M: 18th.

F: Right. Demolition is going on there now, and I'm fascinated to see what is going to be put up. Because of all the pieces of land in Washington, that one Currier wanted to buy because of the way you see it. He wanted to do a wonderful building there. So I hope whoever is building something there is building something decent. He was negotiating to buy it.

M.: It's not in his hands, or in his estate is it?

F: No. He had never gotten that far.

M: Did we finish discussing your meeting with the President on the amendments to the highway package?

F: Yes. That was all, we didn't discuss specific amendments there.

M: I mean, you had digressed a little bit.

F: And I was working then on--

M: We had finished completely?

F: Yes.

Oh, this is interesting. We were working on this highway beauty awards party. Mrs. Johnson said on the first of January that she wanted to see Liz and me at two-thirty that afternoon about it. So everyone had to scramble to get the guest lists put together and possible award winners. I somehow didn't think I needed to get everything ready for her for two more days, so we went through a great race! So then we took everything upstairs, and she began to worry about whether to invite members of the Public Works Committee. If she invited fifty of them, plus their

wives--she just wasn't sure whether to do it. She talked to Mike Manatos and asked what his reaction was. Liz and I felt that she ought to, that it would help our friends and it wouldn't hurt our enemies to invite them to the party at the White House. She was really quite unsure and reluctant about doing it. She did end up and do it, but I felt that whole meeting with her was a mess, because I was not ready to sit down with her yet. I didn't have everything really well developed.

The next day we met with her again, Liz and I, and again went over her worry about whether if she had this party she would be antagonizing members of Congress. Then she went through with a fine-toothed comb the BPR press release about the awards program. She rewrote it entirely before she was done!

M: What was her sensitivity evolving from?

F: Knowing that she was often blamed with having pushed highway beautification too much. Doug Cater called me to brief him on the Highway Beautification Act. He was having lunch with the President the next day. He didn't talk much, just asked me a lot of questions. I told him which amendments I thought were preferable, and that I felt we ought to move soon on them and it ought to come to the President's attention.

February 9 I was invited by citizens' groups on Capitol Hill to give the Halprin report, with the slides and the panels, since so many of the recommendations devolved around their neighborhood. Actually, I think the program had been set for the eighth of February at Hine Junior High School. There was a terrible blizzard. There was still heavy snow by the ninth, but we did cancel it the night of the eighth and postponed it to the ninth. Even with the cancellation and the change of dates seven hundred people showed up, which shows the huge amount of interest.

It was what I'd call a dynamic meeting. There were conservative restoration society types who, a) didn't want anyone mussing around in their neighborhood, and b) did not want recreation facilities developed that would attract more blacks, and particularly noisy black children near their homes. Understandable, very understandable, Capitol East being a very transitional neighborhood and really a very well integrated one. But then you have both poles. One particularly nasty man said, "All right, Mrs. Francis, you have plans to do all of these things for our neighborhood. Now, tell us what you are going to do to Lincoln Park. I live across the street from Lincoln Park. It's a mess, and I want to know what you're going to do." "I'm glad you mentioned Lincoln Park," I said, "it's a lovely and important open space. No, the Beautification Committee has not developed any plans for it. What do you think ought to be done there?" And the room sort of broke up.

Wolf von Eckhardt came, Polly Shackleton, Charlie Horsky, Nash Castro,

and my husband were sitting in the front row as a rooting section. There were many strong pros and cons. A particularly eloquent, tawdry black man with bad teeth, unknown age, got up and came up to the front and took the microphone and said his name was Jesse Locke and he lived at the bottom of the hill down toward Capper. All of this was well and good, and if these white folks up here didn't want all these parks and inner-blocks and recreation facilities, "Me and my neighbors at the bottom of the hill sure do want them." There were great bursts of applause and people standing up. As I say, it was a very lively meeting.

The next day, Saturday, or maybe this was Thursday night, and [it would be] Friday, the meeting went on. It was three or four hours of give and take. It was a long meeting. Friday's Star carried a headline, "Beautification Proposals Receive Rocky Reception." There were a couple of pictures of me, and the headline and the caption and one of the photos showing a couple of women doing this [yawns] were not very becoming. The text of the article, which Bobbie Hornig had done, was fine; it was good, straight reporting. Wolf had reported it in the Post, citing pros and cons. Anyway, Saturday morning Mrs. Johnson called up and said she saw in the paper that I had had a rough time. She asked whether the neighborhood just didn't want these park and recreation areas. But I really had come to the conclusion that opposition came from a vocal conservative minority, and the area was sufficiently large and there were so many people who really wanted recreational facilities that we would know where to work and where to stay away from. She told me I was much braver than she would have been in going out into a crowd like that and holding forth.

At nine o'clock Bess and Mrs. Johnson and I took the shuttle to go up to New York to the memorial service for the Curriers. Bess did not attend the service, but she and Mrs. Johnson were going to shop later in the day. William Walton of the Fine Arts Commission was on the same plane. Walter Washington was on the plane. Mrs. Johnson asked him to come up and sit with her, which he did. I also noted in front of the church that Walter sort of maneuvered to be standing at her side when the pictures were taken. Liz gets you sensitive to things like that, and I did notice it.

Mrs. Johnson was escorted down to the front of the church. I sat sort of at the back and on the side with Bill Walton and Walter and Larry Halprin. It was at Saint James. The service was wonderful. It had lightness, whimsy, beauty and sustenance. Lloyd Garrison spoke for a long time, and I kept my composure until he read a telegram from the three men aboard the yawl that had been waiting for the Curriers to arrive, and they were going to go out on the yawl, saying that they had scattered flower petals on the Caribbean for Mr. and Mrs. Currier. Then Walter and Bill and Larry and I all, I guess, dissolved at the same time. Larry uses big red bandanas, so this bandana went up and down the row, and we all used it.

Garrison spoke of the Curriers and quoted some of the charming, delightful letters they had written to each other. One time Audrey threw a birthday party which was a mock nomination of Stephen for president. She had buttons and posters and bands and a real political campaign and nominating speeches. Another time she had imported a gondola from Venice; they had a Venetian party. Another time she had written a book for him, and there were letters to him from all the different animals on the farm. Here at the memorial service Garrison read the letter from the horse, which was absolutely just priceless! Just priceless! Garrison only ended up by saying, "They have left us with lots to do."

I went off to the Metropolitan for the afternoon. Bobby Kennedy was at the funeral, John Lindsay, a lot of people. Then, this was very funny. I was in a taxi on my way out to the airport to get the shuttle back, and there was a yelling from the vehicle beside us. I looked, and it was a limousine with Bess and Mrs. Johnson in it. So I got out of my cab and threw him a bill and jumped in the car with them. As a matter of fact, this necklace that I'm wearing I bought at the Metropolitan that day. Mrs. Johnson had bought a yellow dress, so she was describing her dress and I was talking about this.

The sixteenth of February we did have the highway beautification awards program at the White House. There were endless last minute flaps. Three hours before the ceremony started the Bureau of Public Roads had the printed program all wrong and had to send it back. There wasn't a printed program, and they just had to change the order of things. Alan Boyd's speech was a bore, which is not Alan's fault but the people who wrote it for him. Mrs. Waller of the Garden Clubs of America told me that she told Mrs. Johnson that she had been so discouraged over the Highway Beautification Act that the Garden Clubs were going to withdraw their support entirely, that I had written her a letter urging her to stay with it, which I had, and she told Mrs. Johnson that my letter was so convincing that they had decided to come back in the fight again. But this is what I had been doing. I had been working with everything I had trying to keep our supporters with us. It took a lot of work.

Oh, this is great. The twenty-third of February Liz, Nash and I went to a sandwich meeting in Katie Louchheim's offices to discuss the forty-five carloads of Mexican playground equipment that were coming in a couple of weeks, a gift from Mrs. Diaz Ordaz to Mrs. Johnson and the children of the city of Washington. Nash had assembled a list of sites that the equipment was to go on. They were all Park Service sites. He had not consulted with the school department, nor had he considered how much space each one of these things was going to take up. It wasn't just that there were forty-five sets; there were six or eight pieces in a set. It wasn't forty-five pieces, but two hundred and some pieces.

If all of it went on Park Service land, I knew who was going to have the phone

calls from the Recreation Department and the Public Housing and the other people who would feel they wanted some, too. So I quickly got a meeting, including Nash, in my office, and I had everyone present lists of where they thought the equipment ought to go. Then we divided up the pie, and everybody got some of it. But I consider that a close squeeze. I think Nash was rather upset with me, too, because he put out a press release saying where it was all to go. Some of it was right next to high speed traffic and everything else. He called me, and he said, "Listen, this release has gone out, and the list has gone out." This was the day we were going to have the meeting to decide where it was going to go. We had the meeting anyway, and it worked.

M: What type of toys were these?

F: Oh, they were wonderful climbing [toys], fancifully painted, bright colors. Some have things that rotate, but they're tubular aluminum, I guess, shaped some like a giraffe, one like a top, bars to climb on, a thing that whirls around, just a variety of delightful [things], not as durable as one might want. Some of it did get broken and has, but really an enchanting gift. We had a ceremony out at Hains Point. The Mexican Ambassador and Mrs. Johnson unveiled the first playground of it, and lots and lots of children came and had their pictures taken climbing all over it, really charming.

Here it is the twenty-fourth of March. The Park Service is developing its contract with Halprin on the Anacostia, but the Highway Department is snoozing. There was a lot of footdragging, and I--Charlie Horsky agreed--figured they were going to say "Yes, yes" and do nothing. So I just decided to take the bull by the horns and call Tom Airis, who was head of highways, rather than going indirectly around him trying to get things done, going to himself, because he was the sticky wicket. We had an absolutely lovely discussion, and he ended up the conversation by saying, yes, he intended to hire Halprin; he wanted to do so. I comment that this was a 180° shift in attitude. I think it was brought about by Halprin's cooperativeness, and also my assurance that Halprin would work for Airis and be in his ball park and not make recommendations that would be beyond their ability to carry out.

The fifth of April Liz is away getting a badly needed vacation. Bess was out, so Mrs. Johnson conferred with me all day on this and that. I admire her cool, relaxing demeanor, her ability to remain generous with everyone, even though most of us would get tense or impatient or cynical. She was talking with Luci, who was here and wanted to have dinner with the President. "Well, your daddy has one of those receptions he must go to. He will be back at nine or so. You know how those things are. Even if you and I have to fudge and have a snack earlier, we can have a nice dinner with him at ten or eleven when he comes in, even if we just play with our food."

I've thought about that story many, many, many times. I don't really think I have any reasons to complain of my own marriage, because I have an extraordinary husband, but I have so many friends who don't see their husband. He's off doing this and that, and, certainly like most of us, they're disposed to just take a book and go to bed and let him rummage in the refrigerator when he gets home. Or, you know, if he's going to do his own thing, why they'll go off and do their own thing. I think of Mrs. Johnson and Luci, staving off the rumblings in their stomachs, but having a candle-light supper with Lyndon Johnson at the end of the day when he needed to have it and keeping a warm home atmosphere for him. That's been a major, major lesson in my life. Particularly with someone as complex and impetuous as Lyndon Johnson, how easy it would have been for a wife to go her own way and let him rummage in the refrigerator.

"Had thick bacon and scrambled egg lunch upstairs with Mrs. Johnson and Bess," this is the sixth of April, to plan the beautification donors' luncheon for April 27. This luncheon would include the Committee for a More Beautiful Capitol as well as people who'd given gifts to the committee or to the society in the past year. Mrs. Johnson wants Udall, Jane Freeman, Nash and me to be the bus tour announcers and wants me to write the script of the tour. She didn't like the one the Park Service did a few months ago for the governors' wives. I rode over to the beauty parlor with her in the car, talked about some correspondence she was working on.

Oh, this is a very funny aside, but it's part of the White House story, goodness knows. My husband's in the National Science Foundation. One of his responsibilities is the Antarctic program. I had written a memo to one of his colleagues who had responsibility for design and construction in the Antarctic. The effect of the memo was, "Really, you people have a junkyard down there, and you ought to begin thinking of doing some site planning and getting rid of your solid waste. Just don't leave it around to float out to sea when the ice breaks off. Even getting some architects, there's no reason why you can't have a picture window and look at Mt. Erebus as well as live in your tunnels."

Anyway, this person is a close personal friend of ours. I've forgotten what inspired me, but I sent some clippings, or something inspired me to do this. Well, the National Science Foundation is a rather small agency, fairly well screened, at least until the Nixon Administration, from political pressures. Now, with Mr. Franklin Long's experience, why, life is different over there. But memos from the White House and envelopes from the White House didn't really come that often to the National Science Foundation. When mine--and I wasn't thinking it was White House, it was me, Sharon, writing friend Phil Smith a note--arrived, it didn't go to him. It went to the Associate Director of the National Science Foundation, was ceremoniously opened, and then there was an enormous tizzy about how it should be responded to.

Tape 3 of 3

M: Do you want to continue, Mrs. Francis?

F: Yes.

At any rate, it took the National Science Foundation about a month to reply to my memorandum, and the person finally entrusted with drafting the reply wasn't the man to whom it had been written at all but my husband.

M: Did they make the connection at all? They understood who it was?

F: Oh yes. Oh, yes. Yes, yes. But he was deemed sufficiently sensitive politically to handle this matter.

M: Did he call over and tell you he was writing you a memo?

F: Yes, he did. I suggested he save the stamp, and he didn't take that very well.

Oh, I was working with Mrs. Johnson, I guess this was when we were working on the luncheon upstairs. Cynthia called up to say that Bobbie Hornig of the Star had called. She was over at the House Public Works Committee hearings, and there was a sign painter lobbyist from Houston who was reading a letter from LBJ written in 1958 supporting billboards. He was reading it into the record, and Bobbie was calling to see what the White House had to say. I told Cynthia to call Bobbie back and say if anyone wants to know what the President thinks about billboards they should read his statement on the signing of the Billboard Act of 1965. I thought anyone who went back to 1958 in order to quote the President, their judgment spoke for themselves, and it wasn't worth commenting on. Mrs. Johnson had come into the room behind me, I didn't realize she was there, and she was just standing with a wonderful grin on her face listening to me speaking up for the President.

Earlier I spoke of, in my first remarks, there being two points of view within the Beautification Committee, the downtown floral point of view and the improve the needy neighborhoods point of view. This, you could call it polarization or divergence, always continued, right up until the last minute. In one way, I'm enormously grateful to Mary Lasker for such extraordinary monetary generosity and just generosity of her time and interest and what she did for Mrs. Johnson and for the committee. I think she personally gave Mrs. Johnson a lot of strength and support and encouragement. But since she represented the flower pole in this polarization, her presidency of the Society for a More Beautiful National Capitol meant that she really wanted to use society money for park floral projects and not for

other projects. While both Carol Fortas and Polly Shackleton wanted the society, and they were both officers of the society, to support clean-ups and parks in needier neighborhoods and further design work by Halprin, Mrs. Lasker just very firmly put her feet down. There were a very few instances where the society finally threw a bone to the blacks and supported that kind of project, but very few in proportion of the numbers that came up before them.

M: Did you ever try to sway her thinking, or was it apparent she was already settled in her decision?

F: I did try to, and it was very difficult.

On the thirteenth of April Nash and I had a, I wouldn't say confrontation, but the issue came up between us. He had told Mrs. Lasker that Mrs. Johnson was thinking of having Larry Halprin speak at the beautification luncheon, and Mrs. Lasker said, "Oh, no, that's not what we want to be doing." "You see, Sharon," said Nash, "what we really want to do is put masses of flowers and shrubs where the masses come by." I had said, "Well, Nash, it just depends on what masses you're talking about, whether it's commuters going sixty miles per hour or the twenty-five thousand people, many blacks, who don't own cars but live within a mile of Benning Park." Then I said if Mrs. Johnson had only wanted daffodils she would've only had horticulturists and garden clubbers on her committee. But the fact that she had Walter Washington and Polly Shackleton meant that she wanted to assist the ghetto as well. I felt it was Nash's duty and mine as staff members to see that all projects were advanced, and none to the exclusion of others.

Earlier in the interview I mentioned the idea of Mrs. Johnson's appearing on a television program which would be nationwide. I'd done a number of memos about it. The idea had been discussed with NBC; Simone primarily handled this from the East Wing's point of view. I did on subject matter, she did on the very delicate negotiations of how you arrange something like this. How a potential producer had been selected I don't remember. Maybe I'll think of it, and I'll let you know if I do. But Stuart Schulberg of NBC had been selected as a potential producer. He and I had visited several cities and several sites. We'd visited Jacob Riis Plaza with Brooke Astor in New York; we'd visited a number of sites in New Haven with Mayor Lee. I guess those were all, but [we were] laying the groundwork a little in developing what some of the story would be.

The idea of the show was that Mrs. Johnson would go to some of these places with Lee, with Brooke Astor. She'd go to Ghirardelli Square with Larry Halprin. There'd be about half a dozen in which she would, on the ground, show the viewing audience some of these new, creative, admirable things that were happening. Anyway, this particular evening I saw Stu Schulberg, and he had said

that NBC was getting a strong idea that the White House did not want this show. It was trying to stop the arrangements. Apparently Bob Kintner had had a long conversation with Bill McAndrew, someone with McAndrew, who is vice president of NBC [and] who had been in handling this. At times the conversation was incoherent, but it was a couple of hours long. The gist of it was, and McAndrew did not really know whether Kintner was speaking for the President or just for himself, throwing up roadblocks. McAndrew certainly didn't want to press it and carry it forward with Mrs. Johnson if the White House was no longer interested.

I talked to Liz about this, and she talked to Mrs. Johnson. Liz told me that Kintner had a drinking problem, and goodness knows what was involved. Let me finish that story in a way and just keep the whole thing together. Kintner threw it off the track, and enough time lapsed before Simone and I could get it back on the track that Mrs. Johnson began to get her calendar committed, the time that we actually would have done shooting, which meant that we couldn't do shooting in May. It would have to go on into the fall. A number of cities blew up that summer, and maybe Kintner was right. I don't know what his arguments were, but in retrospect one can look back and say that it was already too late to get across a positive story about cities. Bad news was boiling up. On the other hand, our theory in conceiving of the program from the start was to broadcast some good news. At any rate we missed it, and we were too late.

M: Let me just ask you here, did the fact that the cities did really erupt in that year and in the following year have any impact on what you were indicating as the polarization of the committee and the society?

F: I think it confirmed the point of view of each.

M: It didn't sway?

F: No. Because to Mary Lasker's point of view this just showed that the black people were unreliable, and it wasn't worth investing in their part of the city because they didn't care for things. They'd want to tear it up. I took enormous interest after the 1968 riots in the fact that no parks, no trees were damaged whatsoever. Up on Fourteenth Street one of the few stores along that strip which was not hurt was the Giant, the Giant to whom Mrs. Johnson had given a beautification award, the Giant that has a very, very nicely landscaped parking lot, big trees, flower beds, little brick seating place at the bus stop with a nice plaque saying, "Beautification Project." Local teenagers were taking care of the ground, and Giant was giving them, oh, a bicycle every now and then for whoever did the best job in maintenance of those grounds. They also had very good consumer consulting services at the store, and Esther Peterson and I both went to the opening of the store and both spoke. Giant officials feel that their community services made the difference in how the

community felt about them when Armageddon came.

M: Very interesting.

F: Yes.

On the twenty-fifth of April Nash sent me a carbon of a letter he'd written to Charlie Haar at HUD, saying that, "We expect to submit a letter of intent to get 90 per cent beautification funding for the Capper Project." I was really quite surprised, because I thought we'd had this whole thing settled the other way long ago. I began searching in my mind, because it was pretty clear to me that whenever Halprin's work came up Nash either changed the subject or did not say complimentary things about it. Other than it being the ghetto versus flowers pole, what else might it be? I remembered that in that first day when Halprin had driven around with various members of the committee he had, I think in retrospect, been pretty casual and perhaps even insulting to Nash about the planting that had been done so far. I think it really hurt Nash, and I've never asked Nash about it. Well, you don't want to ask, "Why don't you like something or other?" But it was just more apparent to me as time went on that Nash had really anti-Halprin feelings and was taking anti-Halprin steps in not wanting his work to continue. I think that has a good part to do with it.

M: What was your response to this? Was there any further clarification?

F: I just let it slide.

The twenty-seventh of April we had a luncheon for donors, preceded by the bus tour. Liz said afterwards, "Well, you've really made bus riding the 'in' thing to do." Because we had flowers on the insides of the buses, great beautiful Mexican painted flowers, and really a lot of fun all along the tour, going around, looking at not only projects that had been done but also recommendations. We went into an interior block and looked at it, and all these marvelous donors and interesting people. Back in the White House, the East Room was wonderfully decorated thanks to Bess, with topiary evergreen trees, bare-branched trees with huge paper flowers in them.

Dessert was served most attractively in clay flower pots, which led Walter to make a glorious joke afterwards when Mrs. Johnson called upon him, to speak. He said that some people around the country had been eating from clay pots for quite some time, but now that Mrs. Johnson did it it would be the in thing to do. Things like this knit us all together as one people. It was a brilliant speech, weaving the various facets of the committee together, marrying Mary Lasker to Laurance Rockefeller, because the people who see Watts Branch come uptown and see something familiar in the azaleas along Pennsylvania Avenue. Udall and Laurance

Rockefeller spoke nicely, but not so inspired.

The second of May, Polly and I went over to see Carol Fortas about getting ten thousand dollars from the Society for a More Beautiful National Capitol to continue Halprin's planning work. It was my first concentrated session with Carol Fortas; I'd seen her and spoken with her from time to time. I made these notes about her: "I liked her very much. She was quick, and she was very stern. She encouraged me to break other appointments I had for this Thursday and come to the meeting of the society and make the presentation myself. I think Carol was implying that Polly wouldn't do it as strongly as I would, and Polly was more apologetic and more afraid of Mary Lasker. I think Carol felt if I did it, it would come out stronger. Carol said she was absolutely furious with Mary, who decided to designate the forty thousand dollars the Democratic National Committee had given to the society left over from the inaugural to plant daffodils out on Columbia Island. Carol felt this was an outrage, that here we had that money and that ought to go, just because we were good Democrats, into the needy parts of the city. I was surprised, because Columbia Island had never come up before the Beautification Committee in any way. It was something Nash and Mary had been planning and just decided to do this.

That evening was a reception at the Arboretum held by the Freemans. President and Mrs. Johnson came. Harry and I were talking to Senator Yarborough. The President came by, and he reached right over Yarborough and shook hands with someone else. Then he and I got into a conversation. The point I've noted down is I told him I liked his necktie, navy with red pinprick dots. He was very amusing.

So this was the Thursday that I went to the Society for a More Beautiful National Capitol to request ten thousand dollars. It was quite a show. Before I came in, apparently, Carol had spoken her piece about Columbia Island. Mary Lasker told her that she talked to Mrs. Johnson about it, and Carol hit the roof and said she was going to talk to Mrs. Johnson, because if all of that money went to Columbia Island it was taking all their flexible capital. Mrs. Johnson maybe hadn't known what the alternatives were. Incidentally, it ended up that the money was spent on Columbia Island.

M: All of it?

F: Yes. She said she wouldn't sign the check. It was nonsense, total nonsense. So I stuck my nose into the Columbia Island matter. It was still going on when I came in. I said since this was such a major project and so much money was going into it, maybe we ought to have a presentation to Mrs. Johnson's committee about it so they'd know what the money was being spent for.

Now, as to getting ten thousand dollars for Halprin's further design work, Mrs. Lasker was not sympathetic. She apparently had always been under the impression, and there were a lot of memos and exchanges of correspondence between Haar and me and Nash, that HUD was going to pay for Capper. She thought Larry's work was competing with it and just ought to be shelved rather than continued. Apparently she didn't realize the nature of HUD's advice, which I explained to her. Nash really hadn't told her, but she blamed me for the fact that she didn't know. So it was a very uncomfortable and painful session.

Finally Nash asked if Larry couldn't do his work gratis rather than be paid. I said that I knew that he'd already donated a great deal, and I thought we could certainly work an arrangement with him where he'd work on an hourly basis up against a total of ten thousand. But I didn't think we could ask him to do it for less, and the work might well cost twenty or more. Mrs. Lasker did say several times that she thought Halprin's work was excellent, and if means could be found to support it well and good. But she didn't see that the Society had the money to do it. At which point I went back to the Taconic Foundation, and we did get ten thousand more dollars from the Taconic Foundation to carry his work forward. That was, incidentally, the remainder of what was received from Stephen Currier and from all the magnificent intentions that never could be carried out.

Nash came over the next day. He realized that we were in a pretty big box on Capper, and we sorted it out. But my goodness, that was months of being on two different tracks, an awful waste of time. Nash said, which I might have foreseen but I hadn't, he really didn't want Capper funded out of the regular 50 per cent beautification program at all. "Because," he said, "we in the Park Service have big things in mind for that program, and we don't want Capper competing with the list we already have drawn up." Very understandable, very understandable. So a few days later he and I had another meeting with the HUD people, Charlie Horsky attended too, to talk about both Capper and inner blocks and how to do it. We worked out some strategy which ultimately turned out to be successful, and Nash agreed to, and the application did go in.

Let me jump ahead a little bit, though. The application went in to HUD from the District government to do inner blocks. It took the people in the District building so long to draft the application, this is May that these notes are being made, of 1967, they didn't get the application in until October. They were so slow that I even volunteered to help them draft the application, and someone in HUD, a staff member in HUD, even volunteered to help draft the application just at a manpower level, at a body level, to help the District out. But they had their pride, and they didn't take these offers of staff services.

It took them so long to get the silly thing developed that Congress had

changed the HUD authorization by that time, and the 90 per cent program went down to a 50 per cent program, which made a great deal of difference. It was still a demonstration program, but the funding level was very different. So the District government has yet to figure out how it can pay 50 per cent of the funds to do these small neighborhood parks, and interior blocks. Unfortunately, literally, if they'd had their application done three weeks earlier they would've have gotten it in under the 90 per cent funding. You know, you can lead a horse to water, you can hold their hand, you can hold the pencil

M: You must have been getting forewarnings of stirrings on the Hill. But didn't this spur them on?

F: No, incidentally not, this just happened in committee markup. No, there was no warning. But it does reveal, I think, for purposes of the record, how far staff assignments go. When you have an overall assignment to get something done, and then you call the meetings, you meet with the potential sources of assistance. If some lines don't work, you try others to see what will work. Then when it carries out to writing the application, you discover the city doesn't have the competence to write the application. You try to help down there, too. I'm sure this is just indicative of the city of Washington and many programs, and indicative of many, many cities and all of their programs, this lack of sheer ability, lack of funding to hire better trained people. It's instructive and discouraging both.

M: Would you like to cut here?

F: Yes.

[End of Tape 3 of 3 and Interview I]