

1963

Friday, December 27th

WHD

This was as busy a day at the ranch as ever I can remember!

Secretary Rusk arrived in the morning. Secretary Freeman, Secretary Ball, Pierre Salinger was already there; George McGhee, our Ambassador to Germany, and McGeorge Bundy for all of the briefings and necessities to go into before the Germans came, except perhaps Freeman, I'm sure he had a lot of things that didn't have to do with the Germans. But two by two and three by three, in groups, they huddled with Lyndon, and talked, and moved around the ranch, while I was busy getting ready for the five busloads of the press, totaling around 200, that were going to arrive around 2 o'clock.

There were White House press, Texas press, some German press -- and they rolled up in five big Greyhound buses. Pierre is a mighty good Top Sergeant as well as many other things, and shoved them all into three school buses.

Dale took the lead-off bus, and I suggested that anyone really wanting to know about the agriculture on the place, go with him.

I took the second and Lynda, that obliging dear girl, took the third.

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I looked around on mine and saw a good many familiar faces -- Frances Lewin, Marianne Means -- and I saw quite a few foreign faces. I picked up the little mike and began to tell them about this being where Lyndon's grandfather settled before the Civil War. He had nine children and he divided it among them all. How we had bought the place in 1951; the story of the whole thing since then, with, I hope, as many relative and interesting facts as I could. At any rate, you love talking about what you love, and I love this place.

We saw Lyndon sailing around with the top down, concentrating with Secretary Rusk and Freeman. And later on he said, "Why didn't you tell me you were going off with the newsmen?" Well, I thought five bus loads of Greyhound buses were fairly easy to spot, so I didn't see why it was necessary to enlighten him!

Thank heavens it was a glorious sunny day, and we entered the barbecue grounds, where Jetton had a bonfire going and great big tables full of barbecued ribs, plenty of hot coffee, and some beer. Everybody grabbed some and settled down on bales of hay or under the trees to try to pick up any unusual news that they could from quite an assemblage of gentlemen who joined us there.

Lyndon got off on a bale of hay and talked to the people assembled there. He introduced Secretary of State Rusk, also Secretary of

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Agriculture Freeman, and also Tom Mann, whose job as number one coordinator of Latin American affairs had been announced.

It got to be generally an all-around press conference, most casual.

After the press and the people from Washington had melted away, we helicoptered over to the Moursunds and I found myself in a car with Lyndon driving, and Pierre, and two or three more people. We rode around and we saw deer outlined against the sky. Pierre shot once, the deer stood absolutely still, and then slightly lowered its head, and Pierre said, "Shall I shoot it again?" He did, it dropped. It never moved a foot.

We rode and rode and looked at the sky and the deer leaping the fences in the pastures, and finally we called in to the Mansion and asked if John and Nellie wouldn't helicopter out and join us, which they did.

We ended up in the tower, having a drink, looking into the darkness and the little light eyes that sometimes appear watching you.

I felt like this was my time off, like I was really playing hooky -- and getting away from things.

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Nellie talked about the home they're building on the ranch, and she told me, with that combination of solicitude and gaiety that Nellie can manage so well, that if we didn't mind, if it wasn't really necessary, she and John were not going to come out to the barbecue on Sunday for Erhard. They were going down to look at the house, down at Floresville. And I told them not to dare come.

We all went back to the ranch house, had dinner, and sat around the fire, "told tales" (as Daddy would say), and then all went to bed fairly early.