

1963

Saturday, December 28th

WHD

We left for Bergstrom after 9 o'clock to meet the Germans, arriving there on a beautiful blue-and-gold day. There was a crowd of people behind the fence, troops lined up to be reviewed, flags flapping in the breeze, a band, a red carpet, John and Nellie and then the dignitaries lined up to meet the Germans. Some of the military, the Mayor, lots of people from the government.

Pretty soon in rolled the German plane, overshooting the red carpet by a few feet, so there was a slight snafu and they had to hop around to get over it, to march down the regular path.

John did look a little drawn. I keep on remembering that what's so upsetting -- he might have to go back for some more surgery on his hand.

After the review of the troops and both National anthems and a little brief speech by Chancellor Erhard and by Lyndon, it was all over. I began to feel, this is a record I've heard many times, a scene that I had watched all over the world.

We got in the helicopter and returned to the ranch, where there were some talks and a stag luncheon for 14 Germans, the nucleus of the men, of the hard core of business. The rest of them would eat at the guest house.

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Erhard himself is cherubic of face, very solid, not so formidable as Chancellor Adenauer. You're aware that he's had to wait a good long while ~~available himself~~ ^{for arriving at the top} of the job, but he looks like a sound man.

Schroeder, who is Secretary of Defense, is a very suave and quite handsome gentleman, and somebody you'd like to know better.

And there was Franz Krapp, tall and handsome, and we talked about Helga, and he brought me a BEAUTIFUL German angel that Helga sent me for a Christmas present.

And, of course, there was Knapstein, their Ambassador to us, and others that I remember -- Karstens, and Bremer, who ^{was} an interpreter, but also a good deal more than an interpreter, I think. And Dr. Vestrick, who is, I think, high up in their State Department.

This is a solid business trip, so that after lunch there were more talks and I stayed out of the way.

I did some work and Liz and Bess -- I don't know whenever they eat -- because they were just like cats on a hot stove, jumping around and tending to everything.

The human element entered, as it always does, when Dr. Vestrick's daughter, Gamil (she is a physician herself and lives in Rochester, where her husband is also a physician at Mayo's and had operated on Jim Cain) flew in, in the hope that she could see her

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father. She got there oh, along about cocktail time, and then we came in and had a drink and then I took her down to the guest house, to have dinner with me and the staff, while about 40 of the Germans settled in for a rather beautifully done dinner in our dining room, at round tables, and lovely flowers from the White House, and place cards, and everything arranged by Bess.

Ezra Rachlin, the head of our symphony orchestra in Austin, came out, to bring Linda Loftis, a former Miss Texas and a good singer, a beautiful girl, naturally. She did German lieder to entertain the gentlemen after dinner and Ezra played the Piano, and Cactus, of course, was there to do the announcing.

Just a lovely girl is about what is said the gentlemen want after they've had a hard day of business, so I hoped that they enjoyed Linda. They said they did.

But meanwhile, in the guest house, while dinner was going on, it got very gay for us because we were taking care of anybody who came and went, like Ezra and Miss Loftis, and Dr. Vestrick's daughter.

I don't remember just when it was that we exchanged the gifts. I think maybe during the cocktail hour. The Chancellor had brought me four beautiful white candlesticks, candelabra really (they hold two each), which will enable me to give two to Luci and two to Lynda.

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And they match the china that Lyndon bought in Berlin. And also he brought me six birds, lovely china birds, a magpie, in fact most of them were a type which I am unfamiliar with. And two vases for the girls.

We in turn had given him rather the usual things. Yet one thing which was not at all usual, a little book we had made ourselves, containing some poems by a young German girl, written many, many years ago. She was the daughter of immigrants that came over about 1840 from Germany, and she was telling about how hard her father worked in this new pioneer land. There was a poem about it.

And then she was also telling about how much they missed their fatherland, and it was written in German, in her handwriting, and then we had it translated into English, and rather prettily bound, with a letter which I tried to make as warm as I could, to Mrs. Erhard, to tell her how sorry we were that she wasn't along on the visit.

One more pleasant thing, in the "small world" department, is that this little German girl, when she was a grown woman, came to know Lyndon's Mother.