

1964

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8

In. sp.

Wednesday, January 8 was the State of the Union. It was one of those days that you have the feeling that everything that has gone before in the last two weeks at any rate was leading up to-- working up to. So had Sir ^{Hilary} Hillary felt when he at last reached the top of Mount Everest, ¹³ because it seemed to me that we had long, long ropes stretched up a high, high mountain and day by day we had been pulling and hauling and this finally was the day that we either came to the top and fell on our face or stood up and planted the flag.

I arrived a little bit early and took my seat in the front row, flanked on the right by Luci Baines and then how glad I was to have Roberta Vinson next and then Uncle Huffman Baines and his wife Aunt Ovilee and Aunt Josefa. That was the sort of--well, I know Mrs. Johnson would have liked that. Then on the other side I had Susan and Helen and nobody watched it with more interest than Helen. Behind us were the wives of the Cabinet members and the wives of the Supreme Court and also as our guests were Hobart Taylor and Jay Taylor and I noticed tucked away on the farthest step in the last little square inch was Wendy Marcus, young and eager and ready to grab life by the forelock. I am glad she made it inside the door.

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The familiar room below began to fill up with the pomp and display that always takes place on these occasions. How many times I have seen it! The House was in its seat. Then with a loud announcement from Fishbait Miller, in came the Senate. Then I think next comes the Diplomatic Corps, getting bigger all the time and how they finally found room for them I don't know, and then the Cabinet and the Court occupying the front rows. And in his most pontifical voice Fishbait Miller--and how could there ever be a replacement for Fishbait-- rose and said "The President of The United States" and in walked Lyndon, flanked by old friends of long standing, and went up to the podium right in front of Speaker McCormack and Senator Carl Hayden with the flag behind him. Speaker McCormack, gray and craggy and white haired, and Senator Hayden--here ever since Arizona entered the Union--a charming lively face for eighty-five, rather humorous, but I wonder how many people in the Chamber were struck with the thought that there is a dramatic something there that says "Take care!"

My favorite line was actually about the first. "I will be brief for our time is necessarily short and our agenda is necessarily long" and then there was a line about "It can be done by this summer". I want it done so that the House and Senate will look better to the Nation as much as I want it to be done for Lyndon's good and the Democratic

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Party's good. By all odds, the most important thing to me in the speech was where he said "This Administration here and now declares unconditional war on poverty in America. I ask this Congress and all Americans to join me in that effort" with a pretty heavy accent on education, on retraining, on health. I liked that line about a thousand dollars invested in an unemployable youth today can return forty thousand or more in his lifetime.

I looked around for my weathervane Dick Russell and tried to watch his reactions all through it and in spite of searching for Harry Byrd, every time the word budget was mentioned, I couldn't find him. I did notice that the Republican applauding was pretty sparse, but the applauding in general was awfully good, so good that a very short speech--one of the shortest for a State of the Union--I think it was designed to be something like twenty minutes stretched out to a good deal over twenty, possibly thirty.

I watched, too, the Press Corps, wondering what was going through their minds and coming out soon in their typewriters. Finally the end and I had let out that long drawn breath. Why should it make me so tired? As Lyndon turned around to shake hands with Speaker McCormack and with Senator Hayden and then with ^{our} ~~L~~ Deschler and all of his old friends, he filed out. Luci and I too walked out into the waiting arms of the ladies of the press and I hope I made some sense

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when I said the speech was a pretty good synthesis of his living and working for the last thirty years and then quoted the lines that appealed to me particularly, remembering certainly that one about "You must be strong enough to win a war and wise enough to prevent one. "

About five thirty we had a meeting over in the family sitting room, Bill Batt of the ARA, and two of his assistants, Dick Nelson from our office, Liz Carpenter and Mac Kilduff to talk about my trip to Pennsylvania on Saturday. They spread out the maps, they gave me a lot of information and about the amount of unemployment, why it happened, what ARA was doing about it, the chances of success, the things that I might do, what sounded the most productive. We gave the day a sort of a fine tooth comb going over, planning what would be the most interesting and illuminating, ⁱⁿ and I do like to know what I am getting into and to be well briefed ~~of~~ ⁱⁿ everything that is going to happen, so it was worth the almost two hours of time that we spent on it. Bill Batt is a pretty impressive character--big, tall, reliable looking, former member of Governor David Lawrence of Pennsylvania's close group. I think it is called a Cabinet and he was the labor member in it.