

1964

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11

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This has been one of the--probably the best or at least one of the two or three best days that I have spent in the White House up to now, spent in this job that is. Much too early this morning I left on a plane with Liz, Malcolm Kilduff, Congressman Dan Flood, and Republican Congressman Joe McDade, Bill Batt of ARA, and about forty newswomen, most of the usual ones--perhaps one unusual in Helen Baldwin who had come up from Waco to do a story on me, and then I noticed Ingrid Jewell who had briefed us in a letter that shows that she knows well, far more about this region than I will ever be able to learn and today I was glad to see Joe Ripley along, and it was comfortable to look around and see Warren Woodward now in his new role with American Airlines, but still somebody that I can sort of go up and lean my head on his shoulder.

We were going to Wilkes-Barre and Scranton, Pennsylvania, and on the way Dan Flood briefed us about how long the anthracite mines had been on the decline, about the mines that were on fire and were imperiling the homes and the businesses of people around, about how the unemployment was twice as much as the national average, that is about eleven percent instead of the five and one-half that is the national average. More happily he briefed us on the very vigorous work of the

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ARA in that section, in some cases joined by the Accelerated Works Program and assisted in some ways by the Health, Education and Welfare Committee. It was beautiful country to look down on, but when you saw the vast scars across the landscape from the mining that is literally a surface mining, you thought that God did his best by this country, but man has certainly done his worst and now it is up to man to repair it. Dan really left just about a minute ^{for} ~~before~~ his Republican colleague, but I am sure he will get in his licks later.

We had breakfast aboard and when we arrived at Scranton, we hit the ground running and it was a day of running. The first person I saw was Mrs. Scranton, the wife of the Republican Governor, a charming, able, tactful, delightful woman and somebody I would like to know better. She was by my side all day long, helpful, unobtrusive. I'd say in any campaign he's got an able assistant.

The next six hours were packed. We went to the Courthouse square at Scranton. There were lots of people, the presentation of flowers, the Mayor ^{we} went to the public square at Wilkes-Barre. I was presented the key by somebody in place of the Mayor, who was ill, more flowers, to Goldsmith mill where there was a payroll of about a hundred that was saved by the joint work of the community and the ARA. We went to the Wyoming Valley Technical Institute. ^But it is vignettes and not timetables that you remember. I remember at the Wyoming

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Valley Technical Institute asking one man who was learning the trade of painting ^{what he did} before. He said that he had three mines close up on him in his own words, that he decided then that he ["] better get out of that business, ["] he had been out of work for two years and then he heard about this retraining program and now he was learning painting and he was pretty much assured of getting a job when he was out. At that place they had a woodwork shop, a machine shop, an auto repair shop, and they were just installing painting and paperhanging. They also worked with handicapped people. There was one man there who had one hand and one claw. He had lost the other hand in an industrial accident and he was learning cabinet making and he presented me with a bowl.

One of the things I liked best about that Wyoming Valley Technical Institute is that work went on there, classes went on there, from 8:00 o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night, and it was a very ramshackle old building so obviously they were making a lot of use of what they had and Mr. Ray Taylor, who was running it, said they had almost complete assurance of jobs for the people when they finished their training. But it's much more. It's vignettes you remember. People and people and people stretched out in the cold frosty squares around you, and a little child with a muffler right up to its nose, and

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children sitting on top of their father's shoulders, and outstretched hands in every direction. I've really enjoyed the day and I think they enjoyed me.

We had lunch at the home of the President of Wilkes College, Dr. and Mrs. Farley, and just as we were about to wheel into their drive, I saw a sign that I wanted to read. It said George Catlin, so I asked if the group of cars could please grind to a halt, all six of us--six cars in procession, ^{almost} ~~we~~ piled up on each other, but I did get to read the sign. It's odd that when you learn about something you keep on coming across it more and more. This is the George Catlin who painted the Sioux, the Dakotas, the Navajos, the Indians of the plains, of Oklahoma and Kansas and the Dakotas and he was born a long ways from where his talent came to flourish. He was born there in Scranton.

We had a quiet respite for lunch, very short though. I have learned to understand that rest periods usually just disappear. Then we went to Wilkes College and I was glad that I had a few minutes to meet with some of the students, although I was rather shoved into a Science room with a bunch of students there and nobody to introduce me so I just stood up and introduced myself and talked to them for two or three minutes and really felt quite at ease with them. The main feeling I have for them is envy because they are living in a top-notch period of this planet's life I think.

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From there I went on into what the whole day was about and that is the ceremony dedicating the Science Center at Wilkes College. The main speaker was Dr. Frank Graham, my old friend-- former President of North Carolina University at Chapel Hill. You can't beat a Southern gentleman. You could practically have waltzed to his speech although really it was far too long. He paid me the usual Southern graceful compliments.

This Science Center is being built with Federal funds supplied by the ARA and matched by local money. That is one of the things I liked about the whole feeling of the day, that there were local brains, local initiative, and local money coming up from even some of the poorest of pockets to help meet the very serious problem that confronts them. The aim of the Center is to attract new industries for the depressed areas and if they turn out from the Science and graduate centers some scientists, they have RCA right at hand already with a plant there. They can go to work right at home.

One of the saddest aspects of a depressed area these days is to think of all the young people who leave their homes in search of something else and if they can produce a pool of technicians there, that's good bait for possible industries. I think it is rather heroic that they are centering on electronics, because to step from the coal

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industry, long a dying one, into the electronics industry which is so much of the future that's like building their own economic bridges to the future.

I believe it was Dan Flood who said earlier in the day ^{//} never again are we going to put all of our eggs in one basket. It used to be coal-- that was all we had--now we have Eberhard-Faber pencils, we have textile mills, we have RCA, we have a lot of other electronics. // In fact, there is an agency of the Pennsylvania State Government called LIFE and wouldn't you like to have the personnel man who thought up that name. ² — I mean the public relations man. I don't know exactly what the initials stand for, but its job is to lure new industries.

One of the interesting and rather sad aspects that I was told was that the textile mills employed principally women and that meant in a lot of families it was the woman who was the wage earner and the man who stayed home and cooked the meals and washed the diapers. Considering that they were mostly of Slavic origin, just think what about twenty years of that would do to the sociological aspects of a community.

There was so much to take in, so much flavor, so much history, so much economics. ¹ One thing I couldn't help but look at with interest were the strange old houses stretched out along the bank of the Susquehanna. To me they looked like a form of Victorian -- very ornate,

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very impressive but not entirely Victorian. I asked somebody and they said they were the homes of the old coal barons, the very wealthy people of long ago. Mrs. Farley said the name we call them is ^{//} bastard anthracite. ^{//} And so the day wore on, a montage of faces, outstretched hands in the biting cold, a boy perched on his daddy's shoulder, children wanting autographs, roses. It was a day I loved living and finally about four o'clock we got back to the Wilkes-Barre- Scranton Airport. I said goodbye to everybody, shook a few hundred more hands and said goodbye last of all to Mrs. Scranton, climbed on the plane and came home. On the way there was the relief of sandwiches and drinks and good talk with the reporters. Then, was the end of the day when we got to Washington? No! I had all of ten minutes to change my clothes and get downstairs for a six-thirty meeting with the Democratic National Committeemen and women and the State Chairmen and Vice Chairmen, I would say probably 150 people in all. It was real pleasant to see how many of them I could call by their first names- Martha McKay of North Carolina, whom I could hardly resist hugging, Emma Guffey Miller, of Pennsylvania, plenty of conversation about her home state, our own durable Hilda Weinert from Texas, Mrs. Rosenthal of Connecticut.

After the receiving line we went into the State Dining Room for refreshments. Lyndon actually made me stand up and give them a

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little greeting and then he found a chair in the middle of the room — of the State Dining Room of the White House, ¹ stood up on it and made them a little speech about our aims and plans, and rather quickly we left it in the graceful and friendly hands of Margaret Price- said our goodbyes to everybody, got a helicopter standing out by the White House on the South lawn because in the middle of the line he had leaned over to me and said "Would you like to go to Camp David? If you would, get your clothes packed and we will go in twenty minutes, and so he had sent somebody else to phone Mr. and Mrs. McNamara, who happily are used to the spur-of-the-moment things. They came and brought their son Craig and we flew off into the night-- 7:30 or 8:00 I should think, headed for the peace and quiet of Camp David.