

1964

Saturday, July 18th

John left early after, I gather, a lot of talk but no very definite conclusions. The conclusion I hope for is for him to take active charge of Lyndon's campaign.

And then at ten o'clock there was a press conference in the front yard at the ranch. With seats lined up, all of the White House press that accompanied us, including the local press, Kovert and Dietel, were there. Lyndon from a podium on the front porch made a statement that dwelt mostly on the economy of our nation -- forty months free from recession, with a rising income and gross national product. Rather too many statistics, I thought, and too fast. I had Janes stationed under the big live oak next to the front entrance with a huge coffee pot and lots of iced soft drinks and, best of all, some homemade bread fresh out of the oven and buttered, was brought out by Gertrude just as the press conference was about to break up.

The questions, actually, were not too numerous -- only about six, I think, before one of them rose -- I think it was Merriman Smith -- and said, "Thank you, Mr. President."

The photographers persuaded Lyndon to get on a horse and Lynda Bird, also. She, dear child, was in a pretty green linen dress and so she obligingly got on side-saddle. And I believe the horses and the homemade bread made more news than the statistics of the press conference.

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Philip Carter, Hodding Carter's son, who is now with NEWSWEEK, was there, a very handsome and fine-looking young man. I didn't see any of the women who usually accompany me, except I believe I glimpsed Muriel Dobbins.

The one best question and answer in the press conference was about the disturbances in mid-Eastern cities, and did Lyndon think he was going to send in Federal forces to control them. He said he had great faith in local and State government and their right and responsibility to control them, and he gathered there were a lot of people in this country who felt the same way. That, as we knew, we had no National police force -- one of the few countries who don't -- but, if called on by the States when they were unable to handle rioting, the Federal government would help to the best of its ability. It was a good reply, for the followers of Goldwater exalt States' rights so highly and yet want rioting put down by immediate military means.

As soon as the press left, like children out of school we raced for <sup>the</sup> chopper -- Lyndon and I and the Valentis, Jesse, Simone (who was at the Ranch for the first time), Marie and Vicki. We stopped off at A. W.'s ranch, he got aboard and we went to the Haywood. There we had a wonderful

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Saturday, July 18th (continued)

day of boating in the hot, hot sun. We had brought homemade bread and some wonderful peaches, and A. W. had picked up some delicious barbecue. I'd like to eat it about four meals in a row.

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I lay on top and got two shades darker tanned. I read The Rich Countries and the Poor Countries, <sup>and *The Accidents*</sup> ~~an excellent~~ by Elizabeth Janeway.

We went to the cove, where the Coca Cola ranch is, and the Secret Service boats stopped at the entrance to it in the hope of politely heading off any sightseers who were on our trail or newsmen in the interest of water safety, because Vicki skied up and down as an entertainment for Lyndon and most of the passengers, and I slipped into the warm, embracing water and swam all the way across the cove. Infinitely more pleasant than swimming in a pool because it's more adventurous. You can lie on your back and rest and look up at the sky and the clouds and the gliding buzzards and an occasional flapping water fowl, and every now and then feel tingling afraid lest the weed that has just brushed you might be a fish. It never is, really. A good enough swim -- two or three city blocks -- to tire me out.

Then in the middle of the hot afternoon we went back to the Haywood, stretched out on the back bed, and Lyndon slept. What a marvellous ability -- to go to sleep within moments after your head hits the pillow. And I read.

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Saturday, July 18th (continued)

About twilight Lyndon, Jesse, A. W. and I went riding in A. W.'s boat. We turned into a narrow, winding slough, just the other side of the ferry landing, where live oaks line the banks, sometimes granite boulders come down to the water's edge. Mockingbirds, redbirds, and red-winged blackbirds flew inquisitively past as we rocked gently on the grey-green water and the sky changed momentarily from blue to great billowy clouds that were pink-tinged and then pearly, and then dark set in. Finally we went back to the boat house. The Melvin Winters had come over and Mariallen. We had dinner on the patio -- delicious thin steak and fresh roasting ears from our own garden at the ranch, and little pear-shaped tomatoes, also ours.

I slipped away from dinner in time to go inside and watch Gunsmoke. And then we were back at the ranch for an early bedtime. Lynda Bird had gone into Austin to see Pam Ward and Carolyn, still a little angry and chagrined at me, or maybe just at Fate, because she had a big date with Dave and, instead of catching a commercial flight back, had gotten sidetracked at the ranch and stuck there apparently until Sunday night, when we return.

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Sunday, July 19th

A quiet day. We rode into Johnson City to the Christian Church, a small, white, modest structure. Not more than forty in the congregation, a great many of whom Lyndon called by their first name as we filed out and shook hands afterwards.

Then we drove by Truman Fawcett's house, catching them in their sock feet, so to speak, and talked about the old Johnson home and the uses it might be put to, that the community might get some good out of. Perhaps the Blanco County Historical Association might sponsor it, tend the yard and keep it clean, and make it available for meetings of the Woman's Club, a home economics group, a 4-H or PTA or Lions' Club, or whatever the community has need of. Mostly it turns out it's tourists that stop by there now. Somebody with enough taste and imagination could do something worthwhile with it.

Back at the ranch we had a light, quick hamburger lunch and then choppered over to the Haywood once more, where we met Mariallen and A. W. But the lake was alive with boats -- speedboats, water skiers, sailboats, quiet fishermen sitting languidly in little rowboats, some families in the pontoon boat built like a houseboat with a roof, with everybody from grandmother to baby on board. And all of them looking at us, gathered to see who was going to come out of that boathouse on the boat which they now have clearly identified as the President's boat.