

1964

Saturday, July 25th

Was an easy and pleasant day. About noon I went over to Lyndon's office, hoping I could snare him, and walked right into an informal press conference. Lyndon in his rocking chair, some 25 or 30 newspaper people on the sofa, in chairs, standing. Untouched coffee on the floor by many of them. He was at his witty and delightful best -- far more personality than he had yesterday on the televised press conference. For instance, yesterday the prepared statement was full of news about the S-71 that flies at three times the speed of sound at 80,000 feet. It was delivered too much by rote, too much like reading, although there were moments of humor. I did like his answer to Folliard when he said, "I would say to the architect of the meeting" (meaning the meeting between him and Goldwater, which Folliard had certainly been), and a good one about why his meeting with Goldwater was on the record. He said something like, "I just think with the ingenuity and the interest of you gentlemen of the press, a meeting of this nature would soon have been known, <sup>and</sup> but it was more logical to put it on the record." And then when they tried to prize some rejoinder out of him about Goldwater calling him "the biggest faker of all time," he smiled and said, "I don't think the people are interested in what Goldwater thinks of me."

But this press conference on Saturday was relaxed, casual, confident, and a good show. I think the press must have enjoyed it. One thing worried

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me. Several things he told them off the record -- I think that is just like putting a nice, fresh meat patty down in front of Him and Her and saying, "Now, Him and Her, you can smell and look but don't you eat!" When he finished, he invited them to walk around the grounds with us. We made the circle, stopped at the Southeast Gate, and shook hands with tourists through the fence, and then came on upstairs for lunch with Senator Richard Russell, <sup>an</sup> implacable opponent on civil rights and staunchest friends still, and I believe always will be, are Lyndon and Dick. He was in good spirit and good form, except at one moment when we asked him about his nephew Bobby, perhaps his favorite kinsman and protege, who is ill and it seems probably seriously ill. Lyndon picked up the phone and asked Bobby and his wife and five children to come up to Washington and be our house guests just as soon as possible -- any weekend. They might come next weekend. I remember one of the strange remarks Dick Russell made, strange from him, and that is words of praise of Roy Wilkins, the head of the NAACP. He said he had known him for 20 years, that he was a fine man, highly intelligent.

In the middle of the afternoon I had a nostalgic interlude. Alabama cousins, Nettie Mason Patisillo Woodyard and Lucille Patisillo Thomas and <sup>Ewell</sup> ~~Eula~~ Woodyard were on a trip to the New York World's Fair and had stopped by Washington with a tour of the White House on their agenda.

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and a halfway promise that I would see them if I could. I could, and we went out onto the Truman Balcony and had a wonderful visit about our youth and Alabama today. Two interesting sidelights on Alabama today. There is mixed reaction to public accommodation. Nettie Mason said that some filling stations that had formerly had just two restrooms now run up quickly two additional rest rooms. They had taken off the signs that said White Men, White Women, and simply put the words Rest Room on each of the four, locked them all, and when a customer drove up to the station and asked, "Where is the rest room?" they had taken a look at the customer and given him the appropriate key. Another thing. Driving back from Montgomery to Billingsley one night, somewhere in the neighborhood of Prattville, which she says is a hotbed of the White Citizens Council, they had seen a bonfire off the road. It was about twilight. They thought somebody's farm house was burning down. There were cars parked all along the highway. A friend with her said, "Go on, go on. We don't want to get mixed up in this, whatever it is," but Nettie Mason wanted to see what the excitement was about, so she stopped. People were getting out of the cars and going backwards and forwards to the fire and back from it. She asked one of the passers-by,

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and he said, "The White Citizens' Council are building a bonfire. They say they want it high enough so it can be seen in Washington."

To my surprise, Nettie Mason and <sup>Ewell</sup> ~~Eula~~ have taken some delightfully adventurous vacation on their boat, putting it in the Ohio River, travelling some three or four hundred miles down the river, and being met by one of their relatives with a car and a trailer to load the boat on behind as they go home by car. And the same on the Mississippi. It was a pleasant voyage into the days of my childhood to talk quietly with them. I gather that Nettie Mason herself, a teacher for many years, is trying to bring a spirit of understanding and acceptance of the changing world to her students.

Later I went over to Lyndon's office. We called Jake and Beryl Pickle and Bill and June White and asked them to come over and take pot-luck dinner with us. The conversation was divided between Lyndon reading a poll from Maryland, which shows him doing all right, and Bill telling him the course of events at the Republican National Convention, which sounds like the Republicans are regular fire-eaters with a superb organization. It was a relaxing day after a brutal week for Lyndon.