

1964

Labor Day, Monday, September 7th

What a lot in one day! Such a difference has jet flying made in our lives. Lyndon and I choppered out to Andrews and got in a small Jetstar with Senator McNamara, Congressman O'Hara, Larry O'Brien, Dick Goodwin, and flew to Detroit for what the press insists on calling the opening speech of the campaign.

Actually, Lyndon's speech was a soft-toned poetical sort of speech about unity and the great opportunities in the decade ahead. There was a sizable crowd at the airport, where no crowd had been planned, including such now familiar faces as former Governor Swenson, Mayor Cavanaugh, and Millie Jessi[?]e, with whom I rode in to the Cadillac Hotel, discussing such matters enroute as Old Folks Homes and Children's Hospitals, to whom she would later deliver the beautiful flowers I received. Ch 7-1

There was a fantastic-sized crowd all along the way, and in Cadillac Square, now renamed Kennedy Square like so many things across the face of this country, there were supposed to be a hundred thousand people. At any rate, there were acres of humanity. Walter Reuther had just preceded Lyndon with a roaring speech, and then came Lyndon's, the content of which was quiet and serious, and I wondered how it would sit if all the audience out there were labor people, but I guess they were just folks.

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The most memorable lines were, "Make no mistake, there's no such thing as a conventional nuclear weapon." And another, "No President of the United States can divest himself of the responsibility for such a decision." (That is, the responsibility to drop the bomb.)

Over and over and over, the theme was unity. And one of the things that confronted Lyndon as he stood on that platform, he knew, was the possibility of a strike by Reuther's auto workers that might flaw the prosperity of today. It was interesting to sit on the platform with Governor and Mrs. Romney, both of whom greeted me very warmly. The occasion does have a sort of nonpartisan connotation because, after all, this is Labor Day, although it is also traditionally the platform from which a good many candidates started their campaign. Truman in 1948, and this was on everybody's lips -- I must write him a love letter about it -- and Kennedy in 1960. At every opportunity, going into the hotel, coming out of the hotel, going to the platform, coming away from the platform, each time at the airport, I shook just as many hands -- acres and acres and acres of hands -- as I could reach. At one point somebody grabbed Lyndon's hat and after a mild tussle, relinquished it to him.

There was one man in the crowd carrying a banner which read, "Read A Texan Looks at Lyndon Johnson, by J. Evetts Haley."

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And there was one little girl who fainted because she was so excited -- she was about 13 and she was standing weeping at the edge of the crowd as we departed, and I plucked a yellow rose from my bouquet and handed it to her.

I would sum it up as a happy day, a successful day. And, miracle of this age, we arrived back at the White House about 3:15, in time for me to work on the mail, to call Mary Rather and see if she was going to be able to settle her children and household and come up here and do volunteer work for us for the next two months. She can and will, but it will take her two weeks or more to arrive.

And Jessie Hunter called me, saying that she had decided she would move into the Sam Johnson house in Johnson City, and be the sort of combination caretaker and curator-without-portfolio.

Luci came in and we had another good long talk about raising children in general. I am happy to say she approves of the way we have raised her and Lynda, and I am also a little startled to discover that she thinks it was a good idea that her Daddy did at times use corporal punishment -- it so happened that he used it on Lynda and not on her, ever, but she says it had a good effect on her, nevertheless! She is thinking about some of the children -- boys,

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usually, friends -- who are, as she expresses it, "J. D.'s", or close to being, and what would have kept them from following that course. She has told me over and over how grateful she is that I trust her and I trust Lynda and therefore they are bound not to do anything disgraceful, not to exploit the freedom they have. At one point she said, "Oh, I never could get mad at you -- you're too passive for that," which did indeed make me feel like a small grey mouse in the corner with my hands folded neatly. Anyway, she's a delight to have.

The end of the day was long and lazy. I actually felt like it was the last rose of summer. Lyndon and I had dinner on our trays in his bed, we listened to the HiFi, read magazines and talked.