

1965

Monday, January 4th

One of the big days of the year for us -- the State of the Union Message! At nine o'clock tonight -- the first time it's been at night since FDR, creating quite a furor with the press corps.

This morning was a morass of desk work. With Bess Abell on house guest arrangements for the inauguration -- there are about twenty now -- and what bedlam it will be in Luci's room, with three little girls, two in Luci's bed and one on a cot, and all of them using the same bathroom, frantically getting dressed for the most important evening in their lives in front of the same mirror. With Ashton on correspondence. And then frantically juggling tickets for the State of the Union tonight. It's a very doubtful blessing to be able to dispense favors! I finally wound up with Kermit Gordon -- who has worked harder? -- on the step seat beside the three of us, Lynda, Luci and I, and Bill Baxter, our Episcopal minister, on the adjoining one. Diana and Roxanne George, Bess Abell, Libby Rowe, and Sam Houston -- and at the last minute, because I had asked the three top Cabinet wives -- Virginia Rusk, Margy McNamara, and Phyllis Dillon, to share the front row with me -- there was room on step seats for three of the wives whose husbands had worked hardest on the product we listened to -- Judith Moyers, Mary V. Busby, and Sandra Goodwin.

Bess and I lunched on a tray and then I had coffee with Lyndon. I hear the house had teemed this morning with a whole planeload of people

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up from Dallas to watch the swearing-in of their new Congressman, Earle Cabell.

In the afternoon Lyndon had a good long rest, and then just soup and a sandwich before the speech.

Lynda in her lovely white brocade, statuesque and beautiful, and Luci in her black velvet suit with a white chiffon blouse, and I in my black brocade cocktail suit, went up together a little bit ahead of time to take our seats in the front row, holding a copy of the speech, to say hello on the way in to our guests and wave at people in the adjoining galleries. It is always a dramatic moment to come back to the Hill! The State of the Union is like an opening night. It is indeed the beginning of the year, full of anticipation and excitement.

The Court filed in, minus Hugo Black, the Cabinet, the Diplomatic Corps -- and this year I didn't see a single one in their native costumes. I regret the passing of that. It makes the world greyer. How can Angie manage them? There were only about -- I think about 80 -- when he came in so short a while ago, and now there are 117. And with a very small Diplomatic Gallery next to us -- I believe it ^{holds} ~~is~~ about 37 possibly -- and for the wives of the diplomats it's on a first-come, first-served basis. But I hear they have to station some Protocol Officer in a good seat comme il faut who does NOT

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arrive early, and if she didn't get a seat it would be a diplomatic incident.

During the day I had heard that Charlie Halleck had been defeated by Gerald Ford as Minority Leader, number two man for the Republicans. No surprise -- Gerald Ford is young and vigorous and intelligent, and worthy of leading. But there's always something a little sad in the passing of one of the wielders of power, though in this case one remembers that it was only six years before that Charlie Halleck did exactly the same thing to lovable Joe Martin.

There were dramatic moments as one looked down on the floor -- Charlie Halleck sitting alone, and Senator Strom Thurmond striding up to greet him, newly ensconced on the Republican side. And John Tower, now once more the lone Republican in the Texas delegation, bereft of his colleagues from Dallas and Midland. Somebody said, "Those Louisiana boys are sure taking over," speaking of Hale Boggs and Russell Long, who just won the number two place vacated by Humphrey, against the formidable opposition of Pastore and Mike Monroney, rather surprising me in view of his vote on civil rights and Medicare and the Democratic Party's losing Louisiana. But everybody knows him as a fighter, and it's so easy to like him.

And then Fishbait Miller, born for the stage, announcing "The President of the United States."

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And then -- how many times have I seen it happen, but it is new in this rotation -- Lyndon coming in with the leaders of both Parties, everyone rising and clapping -- a moment to be savored! And then up to the Speaker's platform, standing in front of Speaker McCormack and President Pro Tem of the Senate Hayden, a picture to remember.

And then the speech he has labored on so hard the last six or seven days. It lasted about fifty minutes. There were about twenty-seven applauses. The Republicans were mostly quite quiet, except for lines about National strength and about holding down the budget, and there was one moment when Lyndon said, "We cut out waste last year, and we are going to do better this year," and somebody said, "Attaboy, Lyndon."

I liked best the accent on education, on medical research, and on National beauty. The preservation of the beauty of America along the highways, in the cities, in National Parks -- the "green legacy for tomorrow." I hope we do something about it in our four years here.

The end of the speech was sheer poetry, and you could tell when Lyndon got into it that he loved it. It had a lilt and a song and a cadence -- about the rugged, arid land along the Pedernales where he grew up, and how man had made something better out of it.

On the way out of the Chamber he looked up and waved to the children and me. And then we went down and joined him in the Speaker's

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Room for pictures and for talking to the Leadership.

In all, I am happy with it, though there will be some newspapermen who will say it was too Mother Hubbard, promised too much, hoped for too much.

Afterward we dropped Luci at the White House and went on with Lynda to the F Street Club -- the first time I have been to the F Street Club in ages and ages -- has it been since Lyndon became President? It was nice to be greeted at the door again by Timothy. We shook hands, and then in to see a gathering of the wonderful young beautiful people -- all of the most attractive folks in town.

I soon found a quiet corner with Mike Monroney and listened for a long time about his trip to Saigon, from which he had just returned. More optimistic than anything I've heard, but a skirmish with two wounded turns out to be in this country a two-column headline.

Senator and Mrs. Scott were among the very few Republicans there. And he came over and, amazingly enough, said some very nice things about Lyndon, among them "I told him he could have my vote any time he needed it."

I had a moment with Jimmy Roosevelt, during which we discussed the picture of his Father -- I have long wanted one -- to hang in Lyndon's

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office. Oddly, President Roosevelt had very few portraits done. John Walker of the National Gallery had told me that James Roosevelt had one of the few in existence, and he offered it to us -- on loan, I suppose. It was an interesting story. The artist had finished painting it in Germany about the time the Nazi regime set in. He was a Jew. It was smuggled out and eventually reached the Roosevelt family.

Nancy and Dick have just bought Merrywood, the beautiful country home of Janet Auchincloss, Mrs. Kennedy's Mother. I was proud to look across the room and see that Lynda Bird was one of the prettiest young women there, but not so content when I got home about twelve to find that she had beat us there by about thirty minutes. She said, "Well, Mother, did you see any handsome young single men there?"

As we left, there were a group of students across from the F Street Club. Lyndon went over and shook hands with them. We had that feeling of elation of a hard day gotten through, and rather creditably, too. So now we are off to the real start in 1965.