

1965

MONDAY, MARCH 22

Monday, March 22 - the day of the Governors' dinner began at the ranch with two duties. One, driving around with Mr. Erb, who has taken care of my trees at Dillman and the ranch for twenty or so years. The greatest treasure on the ranch are the liveoaks in the yard and in the graveyard. He checked them all out for dead wood, moss, and needing feeding. It looks like we have lost one at the turn of the road as you go down to the dam and then Roy White came out and presented to us a little booklet done in exquisite taste of his work in restoring the house where Lyndon was born. For him it has been a labor of love. He is a good man to work with.

We left Bergstrom a little after one, in the big ship with John and Nellie aboard going back to be our house guests and arrived on the South lawn about five. I wore my blue and silver theater suit for the Governors. There were forty-two of them coming. The whole Cabinet was there to greet them. Seldom has a Cabinet been as much in evidence at the White House I believe as in this Administration! All ten of them present as well as the Vice President. I was particularly delighted to see the Governors from my whistlestop trip--five of them. Carl and Betty Sanders of Georgia, Donald and Virginia Russell of South Carolina, she as exquisite as a Dresden doll. I had just learned of a bad accident she had on the Whistlestop train and how she had gone on against doctors'

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advice, injured from being thrown to the floor and with five or six people on top of her when the train lurched to a sudden halt. She stayed on, worked, smiled. Who would have believed her if she had gotten off because of health, particularly after our reception at Columbia and Charleston.² No one would have. Gentlemanly white haired Albert¹s Harris of Virginia and his wife were there and also the number one orator of the Whistlestop Mrs. Dan Moore and her husband of North Carolina, and Governor McKeithen of Louisiana-- the end of the whistlestop Luci's friend and a question mark for us, but willing I believe to move with the times, to the extent¹ that one can move in Louisiana. I am sorry that Governor Hughes of New Jersey couldn't bring that wonderful jolly Mrs. Hughes, who was tending one of their eight or nine children.

There are so many young and handsome Governors these days, the Hoffs of Vermont, the Brethitt¹s of Kentucky, and of course most of all the Connallys of Texas. I am proud of them in any company. One of the nicest things that happened in the evening to me was to receive from the Governor of Arizona, Mr. Goddard, a letter for the White House written by Mary Todd Lincoln, a very simple social sort of letter inviting someone to tea but written on pretty crested stationery using graceful language. It was no surprise to anyone that Governor and Mrs. Johnson of Mississippi and Governor and Mrs. Wallace of Alabama were not there, but Governor Johnson had a good reason. He was making a television appearance outside the state and Governor Faubus was not there because he was dedicating

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the first job camp in Arkansas and had Orville Freeman with him. There were forty-two of the fifty governors present. [#] We all had our pictures made-- the President, the First Lady, a Governor and his wife, and when that line finished Lyndon began his briefing and I took the ladies downstairs to what was to me a new departure-- a small briefing of our own with Dr. Robert Cook, Chairman of Pediatrics at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, who is Number two man in Operation Headstart, to explain Operation Headstart to the ladies, and enthusiastic Stuart Udall to tell us about the beautification program because where would I find a captive audience more capable of doing something about it if they wished.[?] At any rate, I wanted to educate and interest them. It didn't turn out, alas, as well as it could have--mostly my fault--because I had not touched up anybody ahead of time to think of questions and ask questions and produce give and take--a sharp mental exchange. And then both the speakers were so ^{imm}ersed in their subjects that they failed to really give us the simple one, two, three of how a Governor's wife in South Dakota would set about beautifying her capital city or her home town or bring into being a Headstart Unit in her city. The language was a bit departmentalese. Afterwards we had the movie on the White House pictures. All evening I was bungling, dull, couldn't put my tounge to words and was so angry at myself. It is only when I am angry at me that I really mind. I don't get too worried about anybody else.

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Then we went upstairs. This is what the ladies always seem to enjoy most. I guess we have ever since we lived in caves concerned ourselves mostly with the living arrangements. It was nearly nine thirty when we went into dinner in the State Dining Room and I had the delightful seat between Governor Harold Hughes, a handsome Lincolnesque man, and Governor Scranton of Pennsylvania, urbane, charming, easy to talk to. Dinner was only fair. In fact, I wouldn't list this as more than a B minus party and what an opportunity to miss. Lyndon's toast was rather good. He said humorously "There have been many Governors who have lived at this house and I can see men here who have ambitions to live here in the future. I wish them success up to a certain point."

Governor Rockefeller rose and gallantly made the response. Not even the President of the Married Women's Union could help liking him! He is such an affable, attractive man. He said "You have faced tough decisions in the past year and you have handled them well." I was real grateful to him, but the toast, of course, that delighted me the most was Carl Sanders, of Georgia, who in true Southern fashion offered a sweet and gallant toast to me. We arose from the table a moment or two before eleven and everybody made a rather hasty departure with me making a mental note to tell Bess no more rack of lamb. ^{and} Let's give guests that exquisite Felipe ^{fillip singing} the signing Violin so they will know they have been somewhere special. Let's have the fire lit in the Red Room and the Green

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Room if the weather permits and by all means, by all means every time let's be better prepared, better briefed, work harder at making the party go!

John and Nellie were in the Lincoln Room. I said early goodbyes and was in bed a little after eleven.