

1965

FRIDAY, APRIL 9

I had planned to play bridge and have lunch with Betty Talmadge, Rosemary Smathers and Elizabeth Hennings at Betty's house. The question was, would we go to Texas and if so when? On tiptoe, with uncertainty, I decided to do everything I could before eleven, shelve everything I couldn't until "some sweet day", and go to Betty Talmadge's for bridge. It was great fun but not exactly relaxed, with a call every thirty minutes about an estimated time of departure. About 3:00 o'clock I got the signal, hurried to the White House, gathered up those last minute things, told the children goodbye and was airborne--Sarge and Eunice Shriver, Anne Brinkley, Buzz, Jack and Lyndon. Not until we were about an hour out did we know really where we were going because that fabulous Arabian Nights structure, the Astrodome in Houston was opening with a baseball game with one of the big shows of the world. Roy Hofheinz, chief sparkplug in building the Astrodome, wanted very much for Lyndon to come to the opening and Jack Valenti in the most effective way was lobbying for it, which is not lobbying at all, but just letting you know that it would mean something to him. One hour out we decided to go by Houston and there began three hours straight out of the Arabian Nights. We went directly to Mrs. Hobby's, a small cocktail party arranged in mid-air on an hour's notice, a home that bespoke culture, charm, intellectual grace every step of the way and there were gathered some old friends--George Brown, his son-in-law, Ralph O'Connor (McConda is in Portugal with Alice), Isabel Mathis, the

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George Butlers, who began talking to me about their enthusiasm for Washington ~~on the Brazos~~ <sup>the Black</sup> the restoration of it. ~~Slick~~ and beautiful Bentsens, the young banker Elkins. Oveta's house is full of paintings-- some great--all charming. She has done so much with her life. <sup>17</sup> It was a pleasant hour and from there we went to the Astrodome. Here began the rockets and the exclamation marks. Roy Hofheinz met us on his night of triumph at the front door. What the years have done to Roy! He has grown fat--only his body, not his mind. I remember him as the torrent of energy who managed Lyndon's campaign in Houston in 1941 and again in 1948, a real Horatio Alger <sup>youth</sup> ~~story~~ who pulled himself up by his bootstraps from poverty and anonymity to affluence and power. The Astrodome itself, and I had seen a picture of it in the Exposition of Architecture we are sending to the Soviet Union <sup>—</sup> was a fabulous, incredible rounded expanse of glass that seated 45,000 people for sports events, conventions, entertainments. The County actually owns it, but Roy leases it from them.

We saw Roy's reception room, office, and bedroom. It was a unique experience. He calls his reception room "the poor man's Versailles." It was an enormous chamber filled with imposing chairs almost like thrones, brilliant in hue, French in look, and filled with art and artifacts from Thailand, gold temple <sup>friezes</sup> ~~friezes~~, a dragon on the wall, and in front of the desk in his office two six foot tall golden dogs, <sup>once</sup> guardians of some Buddhist Temple! It was certainly a page from the Arabian <sup>N</sup> ~~N~~ights. I looked at Deanie, his wife, and remembered the campaigning we had done back in

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1941 up and down the streets of Houston when she would introduce me to every shoeshine boy and newspaper boy. And I said, "Deanie, this is a far cry from 1941." And she said, "Yes, -- They wouldn't have voted that bond issue unless all those folks were still our friends--delightful commentary on Democracy!" She said they had been to visit their son who is in China. They liked it. They decided to go around the world. They stopped in Thailand and they bought and bought and bought. It looked like they must have dismantled the interior of several Buddhist temples and probably some of them were quite ancient. Deanie introduced us to their children, a slim, fine looking young man, a Ph. D., their pretty, young daughter, Deanie, and spoke of the other son, also a Ph. D., who speaks eleven languages and writes nine, and apparently is going to live his life in the East. What a fabulous record. I remember that Roy's German mother could barely speak English.

Mickey Mantle hit the first home run and the stadium went wild, but the Astros did not hit a home run. They are the home team, <sup>was</sup> though Roy ordered the scoreboard lit up anyway as a demonstration for us. The scoreboard alone cost two million. It erupted into a Niagara of lights, action, noise. I felt like I was riding a skyrocket. I looked over at Eunice Shriver, about five or six months pregnant, who was drinking milk and wondered what she thought of Texas. "The <sup>giant</sup> itself never had such a tale to tell!"

We arrived home--the ranch--about 10:45 on the Jet Star. On the way Lyndon talked of the last week. He said never has there been such a

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hundred days. And what a week this has been. Thursday, the House passed Medicare 313 to 115, the Committee reported out the Civil Rights Bill, quicker and stronger than was expected, and then the success of the Education Bill. This was a week to put a golden circle around, so let us remember it because there will be many ringed in black, but this is the heavy wine of success. I look at handsome, charming Sargent Shriver and bright, sharp Eunice who must have so many memories and wondered what they were thinking. To me, they are the easiest of the Kennedys to be around. I think their involvement with the program is enough that they look beyond their brother who is not there.