

1965

Monday, May 31st

Our last day at the ranch. Much to do. Tony and Matfianfa arrived from Santa Fe about 10:30. I asked them to ride around over the ranch with me and Pat Taylor so we could talk more plans with him for harvesting bluebonnet seeds, onion plant seeds from the Schornhorst, planting them up and down the sides of the runway, where they would be a carpet of wild flowers when we taxied in from Washington some Spring day next year, some other year, putting in dramatic clusters of yucca at the stone entrance where you turn off the old highway into the LBJ Ranch. And perhaps at the turn, where the road branches to go down to Oriole's or up to our house. And maybe a group of flowering trees in the little curve of the road there -- mainly, of course, retama, redbud -- I have always wanted a long alley of blooming trees, but don't have the eye to know where they should be.

We went to the birthplace house. I must find a new name for that. It sounds so pompous. The planting looks very small and there are washes, but the pecan trees are growing beautifully and the bluebonnets. We need a walkway. Tony and Matfiana were charmed. Every time I come, Lucia has added something. This time a quilt done by Greatgrandmother George Washington Baines -- over a hundred years old, precious and fragile, it must be protected in cellophane.

1965

Monday, May 31st (continued)

We drove on in to Johnson City -- Pat, Mattiana and I -- and met Roy White there at the Sam Johnson House. Public hours had begun. There were numerous greetings, requests for pictures. I did it all -- graciously, I hope, but quickly. We discussed the alternate plans for pathways. Lyndon with an unerring eye said, "Don't just have cement. Anybody can have cement. It looks so common. Have some kind of stone like what we have around here." And there it was before our eyes. Obviously, the stone foundation that the house is made out of and the well itself. So indigenous, so much at home. But this we learned -- it must be laid on a foundation of cement because from now on we are building for heavy traffic, and probably for a long time.

This is the third week that the house has been open. The smallest crowd a day has been 71, the largest about 397. The moral we learn from that is to build strong.

We decided there must be a flagstone terrace around the well. That is where everybody goes to take pictures. And from Jessie's walkway there must be a little spur leading across the grass to it. And then from the back door a fairly sizable little apron so that when a busload of people are ushered out the back door there is a bit of a place to stand on en masse. Then a walkway leading out at the Y to the well and a gently sloping curve by the gate on the west side. I

1965

Monday, May 31st (continued)

talked to Pat about my plans for wildflower seeds across the south end, where it would remain rather natural. I know it will be ill-kept and ragged a bit until it can be mowed in June, but how lovely it could be in March, April, May. Bluebonnets, paintbrush, Indian blanket, winecups, wild phlox, verbena -- 25 and more varieties within three strides.

He has had three years of college studying gardening, landscape work, park administration and, according to Mr. Urbanovsky, is a country boy not afraid of work. He can handle the end of the shovel as well as the end of the pencil. Yesterday I showed him the Martin house, and that is where he will live. The Davises will feed him. He had a nice talk with Dale Malechek -- in fact, he had spent the night with Dale and Jewel so that he could be here today for further talk.

And then we drove by the bank. Roy had gone into Austin for a park meeting that might last all day, his secretary said. I asked Ernest to come out and talk with us, and tactfully (I hoped) went over the attractive plans Mr. Myrick had drawn for the planting around the bank, and also a drive-in to the window, and in the space between the drives a live oak tree, some ground planting, a little ivy along the walls of the bank, something native and probably flowering at the south end to screen what I believe will be air-conditioning equipment.

1965

Monday, May 31st (continued)

Large tubs of greenery, about four across the north front of the bank, and then, most delightful, at the northwest corner, a live oak to soften the straight stiff lines. Ernest couldn't have cared less. Lyndon will be my best ally. I hope we can win over A. W. It could make a difference between functional and charming. So far the bank is really delightful.

And then I showed him what I hoped to be my gift, or maybe Lynda Bird's and my gift to Johnson City. There are scrubby, ragged hackberries lined up in the middle of the broad street between the bank and the courthouse. I would love to take them out and replace them with live oaks in a somewhat larger oval-shaped area, sand-filled for drainage, and with pink granite chipping or blocks to top the sand. Pat Taylor thought it was a good idea and they would grow. Lynda Bird is willing to use part of her check from LOOK for that purpose. I have put in the fifty dollars Lyndon gave me for Mother's Day and whatever else it took. A gift to Johnson City, really in honor of Lyndon's Mother and Daddy!

Lyndon joined me, that very remarkable man, and outlined his plans for a small city park, bounded by the bank property, the postoffice and hardware, going on out the main highway street. Oh, yes, and the attractive old jail would be one boundary. I contributed the idea of a

1965

Monday, May 31st (continued)

cedar rail fence around it such as we have at the Sam Johnson house. There are nice trees there. And the four old men who play dominos and who go on and on for decades, since my earliest memory, could move their game from Casparis's to the park. There could be native shrubs and benches, a place to hold political meetings when they needed to be outdoors. It would be something to be proud of, in case Johnson City grows.

We were back at the ranch for lunch about 1:30, taking Roy White with us and discussing the walkways at the Birth Place house, a fan-shaped exit from the west entrance of the main house, the problem of parking there -- it's a regular mudhole by the gate now and does dreadful things to the porch and the rugs.

I heard the shocking news that my long-time tree man, Mr. ^{Erb}~~Levi~~, had been killed in an automobile accident a week or so before. He had just finished working on the trees at the main ranch and the graveyard.

About four o'clock we helicoptered over to the Haywood, taking Tony and Mattiana, and went boating. Lyndon rode in the small boat, taking ^{him}~~Beagle~~ and no doubt giving a near heart attack to the Secret Service as he roared up and down the lake, himself at the wheel, very fast, with Beagle barking at us as though he would eat us up, and Lyndon saying, "Sic 'em, Beagle, sic 'em."

1965

Monday, May 31st (continued)

The great bush ten feet high at the corner of the Haywood house was covered with gardenias. Mattiana and I put one in our hair. After two grey days, Saturday and Sunday, Monday was beautiful and we couldn't bear to leave, so we put off the time until 9 o'clock. I made arrangements for Lynda's little friend, Mary Nell van Fleet, to join us and ride back with us. We boated down to Mary Margaret's house, and then I took a good long walk. There are new houses going up every time we return. All the people were out working in their yards, and I spoke with everybody as we passed, but they pay less attention to us there than if we were some place away from home, which is pleasant.

Melvin Winters had promised to give us a fish dinner, so we helicoptered in to his house in Johnson City and sat out in his lovely back yard -- San Augustine grass like a lush carpet, brick-paved patio, Melvin himself frying the fish -- and such a dinner, fit for a King. Mariallen told us -- Nita never would have -- that their granddaughter, Carol, had won the Statewide contest in prose reading. I love for people to be thrilled about my children, and so I congratulated them enthusiastically, and then Nita did talk about it. She used the expression, "Nobody from here ever won anything before." Well, really, at least I can think of one other!

1965

Monday, May 31st (continued)

They had a friend from El Paso, a Mr. Guerra, Mexican -- American now, of course. Tony remarked that he had learned to speak Spanish before he learned English. His attractive little son, who didn't look in the least Mexican, said -- and rather proudly -- that he didn't know a word of Spanish. I thought it was sad.

I sat at the table with the Guerras, father and son, and Mariallen. Mr. Guerra was refreshingly charming. He said, "I have a lump in my throat ever since I met the President, but he is just a man, like other men, isn't he?" Mariallen had been talking to me about her ambition to send Will off to school before he is through with high school, probably St. Stephens, then Harvard for law, then, she thinks, even Oxford. I am proud of her for wanting it. I hope she wins. She has obstacles -- a selling job to do. But I'm with her, at least as far as Harvard, and I don't put it past her. She has indeed grown with the years I have known her, and they are now 15 or more.

How we savor every day here! For the first time I am beginning to believe that Lyndon could retire and be happy. Maybe teach a little, be interested in the Johnson Library if it comes into being, ranch, bank, ride over country endlessly, especially if the sun is shining and there is grass and cattle to see, and maybe build the Johnson City Park. There will always be interests for his ravening energy.

1965

Monday, May 31st (continued)

It was nine o'clock when we reached Austin, Bergstrom, entered Air Force One, and set off for ^{Andrews} ~~Austin~~. After an hour of talk with the staff, Lyndon went promptly to sleep, a gift from God, and I lay rather wretchedly in the dark, but resting. We were home in bed by 2 o'clock.