

1965

Sunday, June 13th

Was a day spent partly in being the executive I have not been at the ranch for many months. Sleep has eluded me, and, instead of sleeping very late as I would have loved, especially since we had sort of tacitly agreed to omit church, I woke up early and drove around over the ranch to see the Coastal Bermuda.

There is something so personal about the early morning. A sense of discovery: this is all mine, alone, this beautiful world, fresh and dewy! A sense of expectancy.

Then I walked around the yard with James, looking at every plant, trying to reassure him that I thought with all the multitude of jobs he had to do he had done splendidly with the main ranch house. But the proliferation around here, another ranch, another house, another responsibility here and there, I can see so well why he can't cover it all. But he's entitled to feel proud of what he does do, and I want him to feel a sense of cooperation with Pat Taylor and that Pat is here temporarily for the summer to make some long-term additions, to give a manicured look, to help James. Our personal act for a beautification program was hiring him.

About 11 I got Pat in the car with me and we rode around, talking about planting a crop of yucca at the main entrance to the ranch across the river from Ranch Road One, perhaps at the turn

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to the west where one way goes down to the ranch and the other goes to Oriole's. And on the side that goes around to Oriole's, in the arc, perhaps a clump of retamas or redbuds. It's so late in the year we have only about a 50-50 chance, he says, of making the trees live, and besides we've only been able to find 10 in any of the available nurseries hereabouts. But we chose a place to put them there in the turn of the road.

And then we discovered, to my delight, that our redbud tree underneath the live oak on the west side had about four or five small "children" thereabouts and a stray mimosa, planted by the errant breeze, over two feet high, and lots and lots of sumac along the fence where we planted the bluebonnets last year. So we made plans to dig up those that are transferrable, put them in at the house where Lyndon was born in a random clump along the cedar-rail fence on the north side. We can't lose anything, except a few hours of Pat's labor.

Then we talked about cutting dead roots out, the trees in the grove are falling down -- dead post oaks on the west side of the house where Lyndon was born -- walked carefully and lovingly over every foot of ground in the yard and the grove where they have the barbecues, and made great plans for sowing wildflower seed, particularly along

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the runway, the landing strip, to greet us when we come in from Washington with all our guests, a blaze of color next March and April and May if the Lord sends rain.

And also, perhaps, wildflower seed in the back 50 or 100 feet in the boyhood home in Johnson City, ^{and} along the fence line facing Ranch Road One. And maybe pink Queen's lace or wisteria along the cedar-rail fence, and especially honeysuckle in the narrow lane as you drive in, along the fence row toward the house where Lyndon was born.

Life is so intoxicating in the early morning. It was a happy couple of hours. But where and how to get the flower seed? I was bowled over at the price of what must be unusual and exotic wildflower seed to bloom in the Fall -- some \$2,000.00 worth Pat had chosen. Quite impossible. We shelved that idea immediately. But Dewitt Greer was sending one of his men, Mr. Bowen, out to join us a little past 12, and he came, we had a quick hamburger and cup of coffee -- at the kitchen table! I wonder sometimes what my guests and employees think of me.

Lyndon had left with some of the folks and staff to join A. W. and look at a new ranch that is for sale. Almost an addiction with him! And I was to join him -- I promised, I hoped -- at 1:30. So Mr. Bowen and Pat and I drove over to the Scharnhorst to see about

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harvesting bluebonnet seed and gallardia and wild verbena and wild phlox and Star of Texas and all the dozens of yellow varieties I can't name. And in the next hour I had the same sort of elation that a wildcatter must get from striking a well. The field to the Schornhorst on the left as you enter is still a Persian carpet of bloom -- yellow and red and orange and pink and white -- every hue. Dozens of varieties, and it's the middle of June.

Mr. Bowen outlined to us the way the Highway Department of Texas does it. When the flowers are just about gone to seed, are dropping their seeds to the ground, they come in with some sort of mower that has an attachment at the back that collects vast quantities of the fallen flower beads containing seed pods. It's just like great bushels of mulch. The theory is that nature is prodigal -- it has already dropped millions and millions of seeds to the ground, enough to take care of next Spring if the Lord sends rain. And then these bushels of mulch are put in a truck and taken to some other plot and simply strown around over the ground like so much hay, left there to disintegrate. And next Spring, hopefully, the miracle! It won't be very tidy, I expect, but we'll see if it's productive. It's worth our try.

We found that the bluebonnets were far advanced. They will have to be harvested by hand, if at all, so I made plans for James's

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children to do it at almost what I'd pay Mickelson's per pound. We were the three most delighted people you ever saw, Mr. Bowen and Pat and I, planning our next Spring's triumph.

Pat gets several hours of credit toward his park maintenance course for this summer work. He's already taking pictures of the Before, and maybe next Spring he can take the After. We figure that these will be ready to mow within a week or so. We laid out a lot of work. I thanked Mr. Bowen and said goodbye, and for once in my life left on schedule by helicopter from the Scharnhorst at almost 1:30 to join Lyndon. We had a hard time finding him. We were headed for Enchanted Rock. Neither the pilot nor I nor the Secret Service -- nobody -- knew where we were supposed to go. It was hilarious. We circled and looked and talked. And finally they talked us in to a pasture, almost in view of Enchanted Rock, a great, round, smooth outcropping, vast and demanding. Your eyes linger on it from wherever you are.

A Secret Service car picked us up, and we set out, like Stanley looking for Livingston, although I think some of the Secret Service was far from as interested as Stanley was. Bouncing across pastures really meant for covered wagons, fording a river -- a wide flood bed of sand with picturesque rocks on each side and just a reminiscence

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of water in the middle.

We found him. I settled myself comfortably between Lyndon and A. W., and we explored the proposed new ranch. It is supposed to have exotic game on it -- strange types of deer and other animals bought by the previous owner, and a deerproof fence, and wonderful views of Enchanted Rock and wild country, and its river or creek threading through it. I can't remember whether it's called Honey Creek.

And then we choppered to Haywood for a late lunch, hungry and eager, and out in the boat. I am a coward. I do not like to go fast as the wind in that new boat, the front up high and our hair streaming. Lyndon loves it. A new ranch, a fast boat, are to him perfect release from Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, any array of troubles. Jesse Kellam was at our elbow all the time, quiet, capable, wonderful. I know how much he has shielded me from problems of running the place and the rivalries, the internecine warfare that takes place in any office or household where more than three people are hired. Never can I express how grateful I am.

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Finally, we just rode quietly in the big boat. To the left, under the highway bridge and the railroad bridge, and up the Colorado where the river gets narrower, past a huge frame hotel, a resort hotel of 50 or so years ago. A cardinal flashed overhead, a blue heron sat immobile as a statue on a log on the bank. Young folks on water skis, old men fishing in boats, families rocking on the porches. What a delightful place to spend Sunday afternoon, to spend one's old age, or one's summer! I shall always love it, I believe.

But the clock is our master, and close to 5 we caught the helicopter in to Austin and boarded the plane for Washington. Luci, bless her, had arrived back at the ranch at 4 -- a little before, in fact -- from her cross-country trip to Lubbock, and was at Bergstrom, on time, smiling and happy. Her Daddy had prepared to be very stern with her, was completely undone by her smile and her teasing, her glowing happiness, her complete assurance that they had driven carefully and had a wonderful time.

Much as I dislike the expression, she's learned how to "handle him," or maybe she's learned how to handle life. She had adored being with the Rays and their baby. She is living the hours between graduation and time to go to work like one great draught of joy.

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When we got to the White House we could not land on the grounds because of the preparations for the Festival of Arts -- all the statuary all over the South Grounds -- so we landed in the Mall, with a crowd waiting to receive us. We waved at everybody, but were quickly in the car and inside the grounds.

The shell was lighted, rehearsals were going on, the Joffrey Ballet in costume was on stage or just leaving, the place was astir with activity for tomorrow. And tomorrow I have been trying to forget the whole weekend! Well, here I am to face it, for better or worse.