

1965

Monday, August 9th

This was a day of triumph, and to Bill Heath for having the idea and working so imaginatively and patiently on it, to Frank Erwin, to all the Regents, and to dear Clark Clifford, who began it all for me (he brought me that briefcase full of a resume of all the past Presidential Libraries) -- how much they cost to maintain, how many visitors they have, how the money was raised -- for holding my hand every step of the way through it -- I didn't say quite this, but he has) I made my thanks and Lyndon's to each of them.

Then we got down to saying what we thought was the best way to handle it for release at 4 o'clock -- both letters -- by Bill Moyers in his regular press briefing, all the Texas correspondents present, Bill Heath on hand to represent the Board of Regents, Dr. Ransom on hand to represent the ^{University Administration} ~~faculty~~, and I on hand just to glow. And then, after the conference, if the reporters wanted to ask more specific questions, they could have a further go at Dr. Ransom and Bill Heath alone, because after all there would be many other matters -- Vietnam, appointments, the general grist of the mill.

Bill had suggested he would like to have their wives present. I in one of those enormously confused days had arranged for Patsy Derby or Bess Abell to entertain them down in the library while somebody else met and entertained the Mount Holyoke student interns, while we finished our meeting.

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When they left, I began the most hilarious tea that I have ever been the hostess of in the White House. The 37 Mount Holyoke and Connecticut College girls working for free at the Hill and in the Departments and two here at the White House, had come for a special tour and a little chat and refreshments with me. I simply roped June Erwin and Mavis Heath in with them, shook hands with everybody, asked them about their experiences, and then said, "Please go on, make yourself at home, and have sandwiches and drinks and listen to the Curator," while I dashed over to Bill Moyers' office with June and Mavis for the 4 o'clock press conference.

That very self-possessed but pale, slim little David ~~of~~ Bill Moyers[^] was standing up in front of all the Goliaths. He began it by briefly summarizing the Library statement, passing out copies of the two letters, introducing Dr. Ransom and the Regents, and then in came Lyndon. From then on the press conference was somewhat divided. Lyndon talked. Yes, he hoped the building would be finished within two years after the plans were agreed upon. No, that didn't mean he was going to get out of office as soon as his term was over to teach, but he hoped to return to his profession some time, and calling on Buzz to give a sort of historical resume of what had happened to the Presidential papers of the other

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35 Presidents.

I was very proud of Buzz. He is so steeped in it. The last 5, of course, beginning with Hoover, are in Government-controlled and supported Libraries. The rest: some in the Library of Congress, some in old trunks and attics or burned or lost to history in various ways, some in well-handled private collections such as the Adamsses -- but that would be the Adamsses!

The press asked if Lyndon had appointed anybody to coordinate building plans with the University officials, he said, "I didn't have to designate any. Mrs. Johnson appointed herself." Then he told that I had been visiting Presidential Libraries over the country as the first step.

I was asked a question and said, "My main desire is that it will be a living thing and will be of use to a lot of young people interested in public service, because that has been the story of my husband's life." From the eagerness with which they all asked questions, you would have thought they had the story of the day, and I was surprised the next day to see really how little space it got -- and relieved, too, because I did not want comparisons and I did not want the University getting flayed for building a memorial to a man.

When I thought that part was over, I slipped out and at a word

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from Lyndon, I told Mavis and June that I'd call them later at the hotel because we might go on the river for dinner.

And then back I went to my Mount Holyoke students. By this time they had reached the State Dining Room. We went on to the library and had pictures all together, me and the two who are with the White House, and then with the young lady who is covering this story for the press, Art Kowert's daughter from Fredericksburg, having a summer adventure in Washington. And how pleased I was to get to see her and thank her for the research her Daddy has been helping us do on the ranch house and Lyndon's Daddy's days as a Member of the Texas House of Representatives. I showed the Mount Holyoke girls the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden, and finally left them in the Rose Garden, where Lyndon was signing a Bill, no Bill that would shake the world, but anyway an opportunity for them to see a Bill Signing. Later I found several of them got pens, while I inside was trying to line up visiting Texans in town to go on the boat with us this time.

Lyndon in his impetuous, quick way turned to several of the Postmasters -- this was a Bill concerning them -- Dan Quill, Oliver Bruck, Mr. Myers from Floresville, and said, "You all go with us on the boat this time." And he got some of the staff, Yolanda and Ginny and Jake and Buzz, and then we managed to locate the Frank

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Deniuses and the Don Thomases and, of course, the Heaths and the Erwins, and the Lords. I was so sorry we couldn't find Posh Oltorf -- they had already left -- and Dr. Ransom has flown immediately back to the Cape.

I signed mail frantically -- my desk is piled higher and higher the last few days. I even signed it in the car while I waited for Lyndon to go to the boat -- the others had already gone.

But close to 9 we were on the boat. The evening was perfection, balmy, cool, a moon. I had that great sense of a day well used, a mountain climbed, an achievement made. I almost felt like Clark Clifford and I had hauled every hod of cement it would take to build the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. I hope Bill Heath and Frank Erwin realized how grateful and thrilled I was.

Frank told me about a plan that the City of Austin has to tear down a temporary sort of building that is adjacent to the old Postoffice and make that a small park -- a spot of green in the center of town. -- and name it Lady Bird Johnson Park. All but the last of that I just love. He told me too that Homer and Eloise were in Houston for Homer to go through M. D. Anderson to take tests for possible cancer. That is why, then, he could not come out to join us at the ranch about a week ago -- they had mentioned something about tests.

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Suddenly and frighteningly, it is right with you. I look at June, so vivacious, living fully. Whatever pains and tensions the last few years have brought them, science and her determination have certainly wrenched a victory from it.

Don Thomas and I had a talked about the Brick House. He thinks the chances are a little less sanguine[?] than a few weeks ago. Jerry is the one who objects. Ruth's lawyer advises her to put the Brick House and all of her property back into the estate in return for a definite income.

Would I ever have thought a trip down the Potomac on a lovely yacht, that I ^could be satiated with it[?] I am, almost, but it is a never-ceasing pleasure to realize what a thrill it is for somebody like Oliver Bruck or Dan Quill or Grogan Lord. I know, because I remember the way I felt when Jim Forrestal first invited Lyndon and me about twenty years ago.

An early bed seems impossible in our life. I am consoled because an evening like this is genuinely restful to Lyndon. And we were home by 12, I to sleep, he for night reading.