

1965

Labor Day, Monday, September 6th

The very last day of summer. It's been a wonderful weekend, but some work, too. Liz and I spent all Saturday, practically, working on my speech for the Grand Tetons.

Work and exercise are both good for me, psychologically and physically. I feel better about a speech, less frightened, more assured, when I have really worked on it myself. I did. There were about six rewrites. The heart of it I had found in an old box of pictures, letters, newspaper clippings that had come to light during some of my storage cleanups. Dear letters from Lyndon, written in 1939 when I had returned to Texas for a summer visit. And pictures of me in my University days and later, lying in the bluebonnets, climbing crooked live oaks, exploring in the clear green pools and the rocky limestone ledges of the Edwards Plateau country -- the hill country I love so much. Which is really the reason why I am working on beautification. I like it. I have lived it always, tho I have contributed very little to it.

Part of the morning I spent walking from room to room with Eloise Thornberry, dictating to Marie the history of the house, that it was begun in 1892 by a German family, Aunt Frank lived here 47 years, about the cabinet President *Rubens of Finland* gave us when we visited there, that hanging on the wall is a

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facsimile of the letter that Sam Houston wrote to his Baptist minister, who was Lyndon's great-grandfather. Room by room we wove the story as colorfully, as full of anecdote and fact and reminiscence as I could, for the use of Eloise and Jewel and Weezie Death and various friends who from time to time take tours of visitors through it for me. The next one coming up September 14th are the Presidents of the Federated Women's Clubs of all the States.

And dear Lyndon's vast desk was covered very neatly, everything laid out in order, autographs to be signed, Bills to be signed, and one of them was legislation paving the way for the establishment of his own Library, and innumerable letters. But finally, in the middle of the day we broke away and Eloise and Homer and Arthur Krim and Jesse and I all went riding over the Scharnhorst.

Arthur had seen the movie of A President's Country twice, in fact, and now he was seeing it -- the pink granite outcropping, fluffy white clouds, green valleys from the hills, deer leaping the fence -- right at close hand. For years I have made the joking remark that if hard times hit, I still had a resource in the Scharnhorst -- I would get a film company to

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shoot a movie on it. Some great places! And so, while I was pointing out the spot to Arthur Krim where you could hold up the stage coach that has a completely blind turn, and then you go down a road that hugs the cliff, and a huge boulder on the right from which the bandit could handily jump, or shoot down onto the stage coach, Lyndon said, "Why don't you bring a movie company down here and film a Western?" I was covered with embarrassment and filled with excitement at the same time. Arthur said he thought it was a good idea, it looked just like some of the scenery they had used in California, and I had visions of Gregory Peck being the star!

After lunch our friends from Houston arrived, Oveta Hobby. She is going to fly back to Washington with Lyndon. And her son Bill and Diana, his wife, and George and Alice Brown. I loved taking Oveta and Alice down to the little house where Lyndon was born, because Alice had done so much, with her friend, Mr. Nonnemacher, to help me. She had found the old lady who does the home-loomed carpet that we used in the bedroom and, through Mr. Nonnemacher, had provided so much of the knowledge I didn't have, such as what sort of curtains to use in a modest little Texas farmhouse of 1908.

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And then Oveta had sent her Father's desk by Alice, and several things which she assured me she no longer used and were in the attic: a Victorian sofa that was just right (Mrs. Johnson would have just loved it). And I wanted them to see their handiwork. We enjoyed it, with that warm, conspiratory, self-congratulatory wave that women have when they have worked together on a project. I did so want Alice to see the Johnson City house, which she has not since it was finished, but twilight was coming and it was a choice between that and going to the Lake.

So on Lyndon's last night, there was no doubt which would win. Lyndon had Oveta and Diana in the speedboat and most of us were on the big boat. A. W. had driven in to Austin with Mariallen to get ready for the operation the next morning.

It was my first chance to have a good visit with Alice in a long time. She had been everywhere this summer, from Portugal to Montana, to fishing somewhere in the wilds of South America. Fishing has become George's Shangri La.

Just as the big boat was about to pull up to the boat house and dark had really set in, we heard a stir of excitement and then squeals of laughter, and the Secret Service said, "The President has Mrs. Hobby and Diana in the little amphib car."

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Later everybody was anxious to tell the story. If they knew what it was, they didn't let on. A very feminine approach, because Mrs. Hobby did know what it was, but played along when Lyndon, heading down the hill down the river, said, "Oh, oh, our brakes don't work." And then suddenly there they were in the water, sinking to within two or three inches of the top of the car in the regular fashion, while the ladies squealed and Lyndon enjoyed himself hugely.

The little boy in the ice cream parlor chair who is cutting his eyes around in such a sassy manner still lives in this 57-year-old man, and manifests itself, no doubt to the horror of the Secret Service, from time to time.

On the patio we had fried fish, perhaps the best of the summer, hot and plentiful. The Browns and young Hobbys had to return to Houston, and the Thornberrys back to Austin to get their children ready for school the next day, so it was just a small group of us, the staff and Oveta and Arthur Krim, left at the ranch after everyone had said goodbye.

And an early bedtime. One of the best days of the summer, especially good for me because I got some work done and had a visit with Alice.