

WHD

1965

Tuesday, September 7th

Was a day I will long remember. It began about 4 A. M. at the LBJ Ranch and ended almost 24 hours later at the JY Ranch in Wyoming.

Lyndon woke me about 4 o'clock, saying he was having awful pains in his stomach. Coming quickly out of the fog of sleep, I was so frightened I said I was going to call Dr. Burkley, and was quickly vetoed so firmly that I did not dare override it.

"Let's wait a while. No. Not this time of night."

The next three hours were a montage. I brought Lyndon some paregoric, which I use for the strange little attacks of stomachache I have. Later *a Sam-Tel* - tried to find a hotpad, turned on the electric blanket instead, and snuggled up close myself. He thought it felt like kidney stones. He had had a bit of indigestion all day, in fact for about two days.

Dawn began to seep into the windows, but the only joy it brought me was that soon now I could call Dr. Burkley. The pain subsided and returned, and he turned and tossed miserably.

We didn't actually talk about what was most on my mind, and I assume on his - could this be the beginning of a heart attack?

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Because it did actually behave like a stomach ache or kidney stones. Nausea and misery. For a long time -- months, years, I have been keenly aware how lucky we are. But here at this moment there was a necessity to be calm while frightened, to bridle anxiety whenever you opened your mouth -- a familiar feeling.

Finally, close to 7:30 I did call Dr. Burkley. He was up in a minute. As best I could tell, he too thought it was kidney stones. I can only say that it developed rather than was discussed and made a deliberate decision that I should go on my way, very quietly, and that Lyndon should rest as much as possible, and then return to Washington some time in the afternoon. By sheer chance, Willis Hurst was going to be there. I had known he was coming and had felt deprived, because for the second time it was when I was out of town. They would get Jim Cain. They would make all the tests and investigation they could.

Meanwhile, what would we say to the press? What would we say to our house guests? It was Lyndon's feeling, because we really knew nothing, we should say nothing. The doctor and I and Jack and either Paul or Ken and one of the Chiefs must have known that something was the matter, but I do not believe anybody else did.

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I began to get ready, moving automatically, uncertain, but not to go now would be a statement that something was the matter. When I was getting ready to leave I leaned over and said to Lyndon very quietly, "You know this has been an especially wonderful weekend for me, don't you?" And for being together, for talking, it had. He answered, "Only we didn't have enough time." I thought of some moment during the weekend when we had started to go off by ourselves, for a ride, I think, and suddenly somebody had come up, somebody he needed to see, wanted to see, and presently there were five or six of us in the car.

It was decided that Arthur Krim would return with me, and that easy, most perfect of house guests gave no indication that this was a slight change in plans. Oveta stayed to come with Lyndon later.

My last glimpse of Lyndon, as I walked out the bedroom door. My plane was ready, and Arthur and Francis Lewyn and Helen Thomas were in it. I was going in the Jetstar, which was bound back for Washington anyway, as far as Kansas City, and there meet the chartered plane. My last glimpse of Lyndon, he was stretched out on the bed with the wires of an EKG attached

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to him. I am glad I am a controlled person, and I do not believe there was a flicker on my face of what was going on in my mind as I talked with Francis and Helen about the trip.

They, of course, were very interested in Arthur, and he with perfect courtesy but complete candor, told them the barest facts. I thought, "Here is a man I could get many a lesson from."

And then we were at Kansas City. I had been inside of it only five days ago. And there was the most extraordinary big plane, leased from some ~~country~~ ^{company} by the press, with Nancy Dickerson, Doris Fleeson and Dan, Betty Beale, Karen Klinefelter, Wauhilla LaHay, Maxine Cheshire, and of all people, Art Buckwald!

Josephine Ripley of The Christian Science Monitor, Norma Milligan, a few more I didn't know, cameraman, and our indispensable Nash Castro. And, most delightfully, my Lynda Bird, who was sound asleep.

I had looked forward to her coming very, very much. I wanted us to have one more time together before school, and I thought it would be very pleasant for her to meet the young Rockefellers, quite a group of whom Laurance had told me he planned to have at the house while we were guests.

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Lynda Bird suggested a bridge game, and Betty Beale, Wauhilla LaHay, Lynda and I had an hour of one of my favorite self-indulgences, which naturally I enjoyed since I made a ^Little Slam. The time may come when I am totally self-conscious around newspaper women and consider them my natural enemies, around whom I must be on guard and silent. Mostly up to now I have had a rather easy camaraderie with them. They have done little to me personally that I could have called either unfair or untrue, and I am always aware, when I see one of them with a typewriter balanced on her knee in an airplane in turbulent weather, knocking out a story, the facts of which were gotten on the run in a crowded caravan, perhaps, that it's a pretty hard job.

This very plush plane is the only one I've ever been on that had a shower bath. However, I must say it was used as storage to house all the trays.

We were late, first twenty, then forty minutes late, and then I quit asking when we would get in, because the fog was denser and Liz's knuckles gripping the chair were getting whiter. At about 2:30 we came in for a beautiful landing against a background of great black cloud and soaring mountains capped with white to the Jackson ^(Hale?) Airport.

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It must have been a dramatic appearance in that snow-white plane. They had been standing there waiting for us an hour or more. The handsome Governor of the State, Mr. Hansen, and his pretty wife in a pink suit, Congressman Teno Roncalio, Mrs. Fred Montell of the Garden Club, and Mary and Laurance Rockefeller with their son Larry and a friend of his, Jerry.

It was a 45-minute ride from the airport up the Valley to the JY Ranch, and all the way I was thinking, as I talked with Mary and Laurance Rockefeller, how soon could I call Washington? Did the message that I had gotten from the Secret Service just as I had stepped on our plane mean anything? It just said, "The President said goodbye, everything's fine." But only two minutes had elapsed from the time I walked out the bedroom door, seeing him enmeshed in the EKG wires, till I put my foot on the steps of the plane. How could he have gotten the results of the EKG?

Lynda followed with Larry and Jerry Reese. And so, divided between my silent worry and my elation at the beauty of this place, I arrived at Honeymoon Cabin, a real log cabin whose picture window frames Elks Lake and two towering peaks of the Tetons. There was a roaring fire, and the most inviting-looking chaise lounge right in front of the window that said, "Come,

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spend your three days here!" I practiced my speech and had my hair done and dressed for the evening.

This evening I thought I would do my best and I will justify my trip. Brent had called. Lynda had asked him to go to the banquet with us and was a little uncertain, tentative, about what she should do, and hesitant when she found that none of the young Rockefellers except Stephen, who is married, were going to the banquet.

At the Lodge I met all the head table guests. Nicest of all was that Senator Clinton Anderson and Henrietta were there. American Forestry Association people, the Connaughtons and the Hornadays, and their President, Peter Watt sick, who turned out to be from Greenville, Mississippi, and a great friend of Lela and Doug Wynn. Several of the officers of the American Conservation Association, and, of course, Mrs. Montell, of the National Council of State Garden Clubs, and Governor and Mrs. Hanson.

The dinner was enlivened by the fact that we began to get colder and colder about midway and discovered the upper portion of the window, some 12 feet high, wide open to the wintry mountain air. Various staff people appeared, trying

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to close them, and then disappeared , and it was not until Mr. Rockefeller himself got up and made a valiant effort with a long pole that they really got into high gear and somehow the windows were closed.

The nicest part of the evening was when Senator Clinton Anderson was presented with the American Forestry Association's Distinguished Service Award, and the President, Mr. Wattsick, said, "His service to forestry is unexcelled by any living man." When Clint rose to answer, I noticed the deep red of his complexion and a slight speech difficulty I had not seen before this summer, which, combined with a little shuffling of the feet, made me so glad that honors, good things, well deserved, were being said to him now. He is one of those undefeatable people, though, who goes right on working.

Right in the middle of the dinner, Jerry Kivett leaned over me and said, "The President would like to speak to you immediately." My heart thudded, but my voice said, casually and politely, I hope, to Mr. Rockefeller on my left: "Would you excuse me, please, a minute?" And I went into a private room where there was a phone and heard Lyndon's voice, natural and hearty enough to be reassuring. I hadn't been able to reach him in the three hours that I was at Honeymoon

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Cabin. Dr. Hurst was there, they had had X-rays, they thought it sounded like gall stones, he had had some bad times, but he felt better. He was going on with the appointments he had; he was not going to make any more. He would not make any statement. Jim Cain would arrive and they would have further tests the next day.

He also told me to make a good speech and to give all the Garden Club ladies and the conservationists his thanks and greetings.

I was relieved to hear him sounding so much like himself, relieved that we had had Jim Cain and Willis Hurst at the White House so often that their presence would cause no flurry, relieved that he gave me the nugget of truth upon which to hang an excuse for my disappearance for a moment, that he'd sent them greetings and said, "Make a good speech."

So I walked back in to the head table, pounds lighter and years younger, and soon, after a very kind introduction by Laurance Rockefeller, "The Constitution of the United States does not mention the First Lady of our Land. Our statute books give the position no specific power or authority. Yet it can be a position of tremendous influence. Our speaker this evening has chosen

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to exercise her position of First Lady to the fullest extent. She has brought charm, dedication, willingness to work, and great acumen to a wide range of public affairs."

And then it was my turn. And I do think it was one of the best speeches I have ever made to an audience in tune with the subject matter and quiet enough to hear a pin drop. Seldom do I feel proud of myself. I did this time, and glad of every hour I had spent on the speech, particularly the personal portions.

And then -- this was Liz's doing and my ready acquiescence -- I went with Mrs. Montell to the front door and shook hands with all of the 500 guests as they emerged, finding many old friends along some campaign trail and some visits across the United States.

And then, work over, and feeling at least a remission of anxiety about Lyndon, I left with the Rockefellers for the ride to the JY Ranch. A moonlight night in the Grand Tetons, and two perfect days ahead of me. I am looking forward to getting to know them better, as well as the trails of the mountainsides. Also the young people, Larry and his friend ^{Gerry} Reese, and their nephew, John D. Rockefeller IV, called Jay, who is about 6 feet 5, and beautiful, blonde little Sharon Percy, whose father had run

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for Governor of, what^{it} Illinois or Indiana, and Stephen Rockefeller, who is Nelson's son. Our cottage is named Honeymoon Cottage because he and his young wife, Anne Marie, devoured and pursued by the press, had fled to it as a refuge on their honeymoon; only to have their family do such things as put a few balloons tucked away in the fireplace that would explode with a loud pop when the fire was lit, and a Forest Ranger who had agreed to knock on the door at 2 A. M. with the word that he was a reporter from The Denver Post, who had walked all night through the mountains, tired and hungry, trying to locate their cabin, and couldn't he please come in.

It was 12 when I went to bed. Lynda was still out on a date with Brent. I lit the fire in my bedroom and drifted off to sleep with that most luxurious of accompaniments -- dancing firelight on the ceiling and the crackling of the wood.