

1965

Wednesday, September 15th

Was a day of work and family and an interesting encounter.

In the morning I tackled my desk. It makes you wonder if a vacation is worthwhile. And then talked with Lynda and Luci about schools and budgets and hamsters.

I ate lunch with Lyndon and Marvin and Jack. And Lyndon used the occasion to give a demonstration of the trouble he was having keeping his clothes up. The belt in the last hole, the fabric of the pants gathered up in bulging folds. He now weighs what he did when he entered the Presidency. His monolithic will power, once applied, is staggering to watch but no fun to compete with.

Obviously, he was getting fun out of his demonstration, and I could see a grin on the always correct face of Johnson the butler.

In the afternoon, more work, with Liz, on the speeches for the American Institute of Park Executives. And later the dedication of a horticultural dome. And then the next day, Peoria. It frightens me. Suddenly they are only 6 days away and I am totally unprepared and swear I won't accept any more.

We called Marian McBride, mother of six children and newspaper reporter, in Milwaukee, to find out just what people do in those 134 parks. Impressive that 12 million or whatever

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visitors do use them, but you remember it only in terms of the word picture: Mama and Papa and Susan and John spreading fried chicken and sandwiches on the picnic table, after Susan and John have seen how high they can pump in the swings and fed the ducks and walked the Nature Trail.

And worked with Bess on the party for the dedication of the stage on September 29th.

And then, at four o'clock, a very interesting hour with Mrs. David Bruce, the wife of our Ambassador to Great Britain, with most illustrious former posts of Paris and Bonn. Katie Louchheim had called and said she was in town, Mrs. Bruce, felt that she didn't know me very well and would like to come over for a little visit.

I welcomed it, because from afar I have always regarded her as one of the best of us to represent America. Beautiful and young and on the best-dressed list always. This always makes me feel quite small. But also intelligent, serious, and warm. She and Katie came. I asked Lynda Bird to join us, and we had a delightful hour.

I asked her if I only imagined that there was a change in the British people the last 5 or 10 years. I seem to see it in the

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press, Beatles and all, or is it an overblown phantasm? She said she thought it really was. What does it consist of? She answered, "One, for the first time in many years, several centuries perhaps, the young are making themselves felt. Their tastes, their activities," And the second point she illustrated by going into a little store, a department store, and saying to the nice-looking clerk, as they call them, in his morning coat: "Oh, I'm sorry about the bad news that the budget must mean to many of your countrymen." (It seems the new budget has imposed further taxes on beer and cigarettes and such things that meant hardships on middleclass folks.)

And the clerk said, "Yes, Madam, but we don't expect good news any more."

The third and really overwhelming fact is the magnificent cohesion, the great spirit that held the British together all during the war, and then, when it was over, victory was in a way empty. A person got one egg once a week and one serving of meat, while the vanquished -- Germany, particularly -- went to work rebuilding, with generous help, with frenetic energy and determination, somehow England stayed in a dismal fog of stalemate, with

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no longer a great amalgam of working together toward victory, with a vague virus of bitterness.

Another example. She said when they were having some work done on the Embassy, one day she counted 13 tea breaks. How glad I am that Lyndon was not a visitor there that day!

Lynda was delighted with her, and she with Lynda. I am not unmindful that Lynda Bird just might get to take a trip next summer, to Spain and Germany and England, and this was a marvellous chance to get to know this charming woman.

They left with joking references to, "Your room is waiting for you."

And then another round of work. And then to the bowling alley with Lynda for three games, never beating Lynda, who scored 160 one time.

In the middle of it I called Dr. Jim Cain, who had just checked in as our house guest, and he came over and watched us, and then, while Lynda dressed up to go out for dinner and a play with John Betar, looking beautiful -- how it pleased me that her Daddy should see her smartly groomed and gay. You could have taken the words right out of Thomas Jefferson's mouth about advice to young daughters when Thomas Jefferson wrote

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his Patsy that "Nothing is so disgusting to our sex as a lack of cleanliness and grooming in yours," and, "You should always look, even upon arising<sup>ing</sup> the morning, as carefully dressed as if it were teatime or dinner time."

I had a chance for a quiet little talk with Jim, and we discussed the alternatives that we could follow. He feels reasonably sure that it was an attack of gall-bladder trouble, that we should wait two weeks and have further tests, but the prognosis will be for surgery and only the date remains to be determined. He used the expression that if we do not take the gall-bladder out, we are sitting on a keg of dynamite, because a repeated attack, with infection, at an inopportune time in some far part of the United States, or right before some crucial feat or decision, would be bad. So it behooves us to choose the time as well as one may.

I want to do it right after the visit with the Pope on October 1st or 2nd, perhaps about the 5th.

Lyndon and Marie came over for dinner, and we had a quiet and pleasant hour. Few people in Lyndon's life are as soft, ladylike, and lulling as Marie, and it will be a great loss if she leaves to be married.

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And of losses, today has brought us two that I feel sentimental about. That I knew they were coming does not take the edge off my regret.

Buzz has left. In his letter he said, "I can resign my desk but not my devotion. Your great determination that our system shall successfully serve these times of change is an inspiration that makes every day too short for those working with you."

Another paragraph that I am glad he felt and said: "Mary V. and I, and the children, too, are grateful especially for the private opportunities to share with you and Mrs. Johnson the happiness, as well as the history, of these months and years." After 18 years of being with us, I just can't quite take this as permanent. But it is a blow.

And then Dick Goodwin, a truly magnificent letter, and one that I think represents considerable success on Lyndon's part in dealing with people, in coming to understand them, to draw from them the best of service that they've got in them, and, in the doing, to win a personal friendship that was not there to begin with. Dick said, "No one has ever shown greater kindness or warmth toward me." I am particularly glad of that sentence. And then, "I am also grateful that during our work

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together, you have broadened my horizon to include Texas, the land  
and the America from which you come. Beginning in ignorance, I  
have ended in respect and affection, and I will always be a broader  
person for it." Some poetry will go out of his speeches, <sup>with Dick going</sup> and I

will lose my right arm in working on the Lyndon Baines Johnson  
Library, <sup>with Buzz' departure,</sup>

Somehow we manage to go on. So many have left during  
the years -- Mary and Walter -- but it is lonesome and draining.

Tonight I worked hard at my exercises. I am determined  
to lose a few inches and have that feeling of being fit, in control  
of myself.