

December 22, 1965
Wednesday

My 53rd birthday was remarkable for two things. The flight of wild turkeys and a surprise birthday party arranged by Lyndon. I slept late with that delightful feeling of having worked hard and not needing to push, at least for today, filling in the office force, with the tornado of Xmas well in hand. So Lyndon and I took a walk in front of the house and went down to see how the cedar house was coming along. It's being built as fast as a child would build one out of blocks. And then to the old Sam Johnson farmhouse. And then on one of ^{these} ~~this~~ interminable rides with Lyndon and Jesse and Dale Malachuk in which we toured the Martin and the Dan ~~and~~ and suddenly while we were driving along close to the fence line I saw on the other side two — five - ten - a flock of wild turkeys on their tall stilt legs! I had never see that many, that close before. The blue behind their necks were almost irredescent and their red wattles. Then as they suddenly began to rise in flight the bronze of their wings - a pretty shade of copper, and orange and mustard and brown, unfolded. It was a beautiful sight! We counted about thirty, hurrying on their tall stilt legs, soaring away in flight. I have never seen a sight like it before in all my years

here. Even Dale was excited. But alas, they were not on our land! Dale thought they must become that Tom Weinheimer had obtained from the Wildlife Commission a year or two before that produced a lot of progeny and flourished. We drove along our own land in the Dan~~to~~ and then there were two or three, maybe as many as six, ^{sighted} ~~sighted~~ on our left, running under the trees, heading toward the creek. They always liked the creek bottoms. How I wished for Okie and his camera. Nothing could match the thrill of the last fifteen minutes for me. We were back at the main house for a late lunch and then we got back in the car with Jesse and drove over to the Hartman house to see the progress of Lyndon's own poverty project. It won't be finished by Xmas. The boy's room is and they already have a little Xmas tree up and grandfather is visiting all of his ten grandchildren and it is a royal mess. We drove through the Lewis and then on into Johnson City and stopped at the apartments over the Bank, where I feel I have left a few pints of my life's blood for all the hours we have spent these last two months in planning, painting and decorating them. And somewhere along the road, got the news from Lyndon, that he was planning a surprise birthday party for me. I was quite content to let it turn out however it may. And

I ~~was~~ settled for the fiction that it was a pure surprise and ~~take~~^{took} my hours of leisure instead of working on it. Sure enough about six thirty the Wesley West's flew in from Houston, and there couldn't have been a nicer beginning for the party. Then the Frank Irwins and the Max Brooks, and Nancy and Alfred Negley. And Bess and Herman Jones and of course the Moursands and the Winters. And the Billy Bailey's, bringing a great cage containing two beautiful white doves, messengers of peace for my birthday, and Liz and Will Edward Odom, ^{Will} the brochures from Longhorn Cavern. In 1932 it was, I believe, Gene and I first explored it on hands and knees with flash lights, going with some of the Park people. There were pictures taken which described us on the brochures as high school girls from Burnet. And the young and beautiful Frank Deniuses. And ~~Daniel~~^{Danell} Royal who wears failure with great dignity ~~as~~ and promise for the future. The Pickles and the Kilgores and the Tom Millers and my friend, Lewis Shanks, a bachelor now. And of course Jesse and indispensable ~~Boots~~^{Deather}, and Linda and Paul Dresser who has been with us for the last three or four days and is back from Germany; Vickie and Marie and Luci. Pat gets such a short time at Xmas. So it was a wonderful birthday, with all sorts

of confusion and a "surprise" ¹⁷ honored guests, wondering if there would be enough plates and food but happily hiding behind the word "surprise." ^{1/1} Lynda Bird gave me an old book of Gibson Girl cartoons. The very kind that used to be at the brick house when I was five years old. It was my almost favorite present. ~~Mary Ellen~~ ^{Marietta} some date loaf, which has practically disappeared from this earth, along with ~~it~~ ^{Sie Lib} it was the most delicious treat in the Xmas of my childhood in East Texas. There were toasts and champagne and ~~Mary Etta~~ ^{Marietta} Brooks playing the piano and the healthy tiredness of having walked around the ranch, superintending ^{ing} somewhat the planting of the pyracantha and the yucca by Mr. Carter. And the satisfaction of my husband wanting to do this for me. There was no sense of being different at 53 or 43 or 33. I wonder when it sets in? An acceptance of being old?