

## THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Saturday, August 27th, 1966

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Lyndon's 58th birthday. I woke to the drumming sound of rain on the roof. It rained all morning and by mid-morning we had had an inch. That was the first of Lyndon's birthday presents, and the second was that he told me that he had had the best night's sleep he had had in a long time.

I had phoned Mary ahead of time to have some platters of cookies ready, which she did in great abundance, and gallons of coffee. And we sent them out to the hangar where the newspaper people gathered in buses from San Antonio because we couldn't have our usual meeting in the front yard. By about 10:30 they had finished the cookies and the coffee and the rain had also stopped. And they came inside to sit in the living room in every possible chair, on the cushions on the hearth, on the piano stool, standing in the corners, around the bridge table, while Lyndon sat comfortably in his big reclining chair and I beside him. And he talked for nearly an hour.

"A purely Johnsonian performance" one newsman recounted, in what was actually a reminiscence about his whole 58 years. "No hill country rancher could have a better birthday", he summed it up. He had a wonderful family, he is leading a prosperous country, and is relaxing in the home he loves. He was counting his blessings and finding them plentiful. The blessing that he considers~~s~~ the best is "the opportunity I never had before of waging war on the enemies of mankind -- poverty, ignorance, disease, ugliness, -- and waging it effectively." He faces plenty of problems, but none he feels he can't cope with.

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I found myself enthralled, though for pure theatre, if you want to consider that in all context, it was probably a bit long. At the end I was involved and said a few words about my feelings on a trip across this great country like we had had the day before.

Then they were gone and Arthur and Mathilde and Eloise and Lyndon and I drove up to Lela's and around the Ranch. We met Judge Thornberry on Ranch Road 1, and he got in with us and we continued on to the Reagan, and then to the Cedar House -- just surveying the old home place. It took us two hours to make the rounds and get back home for hamburgers with the staff and the <sup>Luccheses</sup> ~~Louises~~ who had come out to fit Mathilde for boots, and of course I asked them to join us for lunch.

Off and on during the morning I had been on the phone with Jesse checking on other guests that I had asked him to call -- The Frank Irwins and the Don Thomas<sup>son</sup> and the Tom Millers from Austin, and our Blanco County neighbors, the Bill Heathes. And the Moursunds and the Winters from Johnson City. And the Dale Malecheks and the Dale Meeks and Tom Weinheimers here at Stonewall. John and Nellie -- we had asked them on the plane the day before. And the Bill <sup>Coyne</sup> ~~Caulfield~~ who have been working with us on wild game for the Ranch. And we sent someone down to ask Cousin Oriole. We had already asked Lela this morning. And Lynda Bird had invited Joe Bat~~sen~~.

About 4:00 they began to arrive, and about three car loads of us started out in tandem as Lyndon would describe it "Round Mountain fashion" -

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a carload full of women and a carload full of men." I've never seen the Ranch so green in August. This rain is a benevolence from heaven. There are not many flowers -- just the golden rod along the river and the sun-flowers in the fence rows. And there is snow-on-the-mountains -- everywhere -- especially in the meadows. Mathilde says she raises it in her garden in Long Island. I must work on more flowers for this time of year.

We took everybody to the Reagan which I shall start calling the "the old-time Johnson place" because this was the land Uncle Tom received from his father, where he had a house and where he and Aunt Kitty's children were born, and through the Martin and the Danfz. And Lyndon kept up a staccato of conversation with Dale about "this cow looks like she needs spraying" or "you had better drench these deer," or "when are you going to get the shredder in this pasture?" His invitation to dinner to Dale had gone something like this, "When do you want me to come Mr. President?" "Whenever you think you finished about a good day and a halfs work just come on down."

Lynda was enjoying showing it all to Joe Bat<sup>54</sup>zen, and there couldn't have been more agreeable company.

It was 8:30 when we were back at the Ranch -- more than 32 of us. I had asked Lynda and Eloise and Mariallen to be hostesses for me at three small tables. And I seated John on my right and Nellie on Lyndon's right, and otherwise everybody just found a place and we concentrated on a good

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buffet supper -- barbecued beef and ribs and brown beans and slaw and hot homemade bread. And then angel food cake and homemade peach ice cream, and a wonderful chocolate cake that Mariallen had brought with Lyndon's brand on it. And without thought of discipline and diet, we ate with a fine Roman abandon.

It was nearly 10:00 when we went into the office to ~~see~~ open Lyndon's presents. The office staff had commissioned paintings by G. Harvey of the Ranch house and of the house where he was born. I gave him a seamans chest -- a crude chest in which some German immigrant family had brought much of its worldly goods to this country in the 1840's. And although they hadn't settled immediately at Fredericksburg, had soon thereafter moved there. And on the lid very ~~crudely~~ <sup>crudely</sup> -- probably done with a hammer and nail -- the name "Saabe" was spelled out. No great hit. He laughingly said, "If I live long enough I guess Lady Bird will get enough of these chests. " I am chagrined with myself. Surely there is something I could give him, that would surprise, excite, elate him. The only thing I can really think of is to learn how to do my hair, wear lipstick perfectly and be devoid of problems.

One of the really best presents was from Liz and Les -- an album for the father of the bride with a well-selected group of pictures of Luci and Pat, of newspaper clippings, of the most personal poignant moments of August 6th and the days preceding it. And a present I liked was from a woman whose name I cannot even remember who had returned to Lyndon the invitation to his graduation that he had sent her in 1924, together with

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a very sweet note.

Neva and Wesley called from Houston. I am remiss again in not seeing that they were with us.

Altogether it was as happy a birthday as one could want. And I offered up my own thoughts of gratitude to fate, to the Lord, that we had lived to have such a birthday.