

1967

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14

I returned to the land where I was born and raised. I had an early call from Dale Meeks about 6:30. There was a front with thunder storms and low ceilings moving through toward East Texas. I accepted it, but reluctantly, called my Agent to meet me in the kitchen, dressed and went downstairs and had coffee. There followed an hour and a half of uncertainty. I asked my Agent to find out how long it would take to drive to East Texas--about six hours. I could see that he took a very dim view of this, but only when I was about to lose it did I realize how much I had looked forward to this visit. Dale phoned and rephoned the weather and somehow or other--I don't quite remember how--Lyndon got in on it. I think he called me to see what I was doing so, of course, he took over. He talked to the weather in Washington, to his Military Office, came back with a clear directive that would be safe, a lot safer than six hours on the highway--for us to fly. We could land in Shreveport. Dale said he had agreed all along that it was perfectly safe, just turbulence and he knew that I didn't like that. I think I must make him nervous. And so a little past nine, Barzy and I were airborne. It was a foggy dismal trip, quite uneventful and smooth enough to satisfy me. We sat down in Shreveport a little after 10:30. There were cameras and reporters at the foot of the steps. I answered questions briefly. I was coming on a private trip to see old friends in Karnack and Marshall, paused in front of a car for a picture

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

and then was off down a wide, monotonous, absolutely unfamiliar highway. No landmarks--I might as well have been in Iowa until going to long way around we arrived at Marshall and then headed for Karnack. We reached Doris' home about 11:30. There was a little group to meet us. Doris and Hugh and Corinne Barnes, a Regional man from the Post Office, Mr. Myers with his wife and another Post Office official and Jim Roberts who pro bono publico had drawn the very attractive plan for the Karnack Post Office and Don Hine had done the landscaping plans--also free. To thank them was one of the main reasons I wanted to come. Doris had coffee and refreshments spread on the dining room table. We milled a little uncertainly and this is where I began to miss Liz. This trip needed an advance man so I attempted to take over. I suggested to Doris that we go on down to the Post Office and see it and could we come back to her house, bringing the principals Robert Hine Myers, Dixie Odom, Clarence Fason, if we could get him, and who else--anybody that was a leader in the community--anybody who would put a shoulder to the wheel to help get the ground of the Post Office planted. This was the real purpose of the trip. Doris said, "I know, we will call Colonel Larned from the plant." Then we divided up in several cars and drove down to the Post Office. It was everything I had hoped, soft pinky-beige brick from Daddy's store. Later Doris and Clarence both said they could remember when it was built--from 1909 to 1911, a colonial design with a little porch, columns and trim in reddish

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

brown and a steeple shaped roof. It really had some style. Now if we could just get it landscaped. It was regrettably a very tiny lot and they had to put the parking right in front of it because of a necessity for safety on the Monsanto Highway and jam up to one side was a red striped washateria. We went in. There was Dixie Odom and a small group of Karnack citizens and postal employees. All of them greeted me, "Hello Lady Bird." And some of them, "Do you remember me?" There was Clarence's daughter, Jeanette Fason, who had tragically lost her husband just a few weeks ago, so young-- in his thirties I think.

We had fruitcake and coffee and I looked at the interior. There was picture taking, but no press and then still missing Liz I tried to gather us up and take us back to Doris'. Colonel Larned joined us, a barrel-chested, jovial, professional Military man and then Cass Fason came in from his mail route and feeling both unequal to the occasion and determined to get the show on the road, I appointed myself Chairman of the Action Committee. First, our object was to get the Post Office ground planted. Second a disclaimer addressed to Mr. Myers and to the ruling general that I expected the Federal Government to put in one step more to plant the ground of the Karnack Post Office than they would for any other comparable one. Third, and oft repeated all day, an earnest thank-you to Mr. Robert and Mr. Hine for their talents and skills into this little building that would hopefully set a new

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

plan for this community and it would be something that we could all be proud of. Next how to get the money and to go to work. Then I brought out the plan that Mr. Hine had drawn. He spread out his larger one, and I pointed out that it estimated the job would cost \$1,875 even if we reduced the size of the trees. Now, I would put up a thousand dollars out of the family foundation, if the community was interested, and would try to raise enough to complete and maintain a good planting job. Mr. Myers spoke up and said that the Federal Government paid \$250 for the landscaping of a Post Office of this size and Doris said the Karnack Improvement Association had about \$200 in its treasury and about that time Mr. Hine said well, they could reduce the size of the estimate by taking out some of the ground cover. We were beginning to approach the goal and especially when Mr. Myers said maintenance was no problem. They did that on a contract basis with the Postmistress, with the Federal Government paying the bill, a maintenance man hired locally. And then two good things happened. Doris came back in the room with a big smile and she had just talked to Virgie, Treasurer of the Karnack Improvement Association. They could put in \$500 and then the Colonel spoke up and said, Now some of these trees I see on this plan--sweetgums--we have plenty of those trees on the Reservation and I think I could furnish a truck and a winch and maybe some labor." Hugh and Clarence began to speak up in unison,

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

"oh, yes, they knew where there would be some fine sweetgum and how about those dogwoods down next to the old so and so place." It began to be quite delightful. Clarence and Hugh offered to go into the woods with some of Colonel Larned's labor and find the sweetgums and dogwoods. I appointed them naturalists for the enterprise and Mr. Don Hine said he would come down from Dallas and spend the day with them finding the just right trees. Fresh from my experience in our own pasture, I thought they would find many a tree that was just not the right shape or they couldn't dig, but it certainly could save an enormous lot above nursery-raised trees purchased 150 miles away and hauled to the site, so I thought this was a real break-through. I told Mr. Hine that I liked his plan very much. It was so truly indigenous. The sweetgums would make a lovely October color--with the dogwoods it would be a drift of white in spring--but I thought we ought to have a magnolia so we substituted one in front of the red and white washateria as a screen. We thought about maybe another evergreen in the back, a liveoak, a wateroak, instead of one of the sweetgums. Early in the conversation Doris had taken me aside and said, "Now what do you think we can do about lunch?" I had no plans. Alas, she had called me several days earlier because Diane had wanted to entertain me in her home, but though I had tried, I had never connected with her on returning the call. It turned out just as I would hope. Dorothy Hughes suggested taking us all for a catfish lunch on Caddo Lake. So

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

just as the meeting was about to reach the end, Doris asked for a show of hands of everyone that would like to join us for lunch on the banks of Caddo. Everyone would, fifteen, and so with plans pretty well wrapped up, \$1750.00 to go on, plus some donations of trees and labor, and more of the skilled help from Mr. Don Hine, but I am sure some big gaps as to who was actually in charge and what the timetable is, we adjourned our meeting and just as we were going out the door, there were two young girl reporters from the Marshall News-Messenger and a photographer. He was from the Shreveport paper, I believe, and for the rest of the day they followed our every step.

We went down to Big Pines and I showed Dorothy Territo the gray sluggish cypress-lined big bayou, along which the big steamboats used to fly, shrouded in mist today. And then we had a big, delicious catfish lunch. It was late and we were all starved. We emerged to the flash of cameras and with Dorothy Territo and Doris, I drove out to the brick house. We phoned and Ruth was waiting for us, looking quite well and very pleased to see us. We sat in the high ceiling living room, quite soulless now without the fires burning merrily. I remember from winter days of long ago. She has done the whole house over, mostly in pastel colors, modern furniture, unremarkable, except for the one magnificent bedroom suite that would have done honor to Scarlet O'Hara's bedroom. I longed to know

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

if the fireplaces would still work behind those facades, with the old random width floors of pine still remained below these modern hardwood floors.

I did not ask, but I did ask if we could take Dorothy Territo around to see the house and we did and I gave little vignettes all along the way--this is the banister I used to slide down, I loved this view from the front porch where we used to sit on summer evenings--Daddy in his rocking chair.

This is the room where Aunt Effie and I slept. I always liked to see the fire making shadows on the wall after we went to bed at night, and this--the dining room--where I remember my last great Christmas morning when Mother was still alive. Then I described it in detail.

As we walked through, I saw very few things to remind me of Mother, a big clock in a mahogany case, two chests elaborately carved, for blankets they were I think, the two rockers that I remember Daddy sitting in all the days of his life, and finally a small graceful mahogany teatable and this I would so have loved to ask Ruth for for a wedding present for Lynda. I couldn't quite.

We drove on to the Marshall National Bank, picked up Mr. Vivian Hackey and then went to the old County Courthouse. I have some wonderful pictures of Lyndon campaigning for the Senate here in 1941, and also of his opponent--Gerald Mann, and also the successful candidate, Pappy O'Daniel. This was one of my main destinations of the trip. We wanted to see the Harrison County Historical Museum. For nearly an hour and a half we wandered through it. First, a collection of Indian artifacts from the Caddo Indians,

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

extensive and fairly sophisticated, many of them donated by Kelly Arnold, who gave me the very first artifact I ever owned. Then the Lady Bird Taylor Johnson Exhibit, which was done in excellent taste, I think. The red satin dress I had sent them was displayed in a very large cabinet and a very nice mannequin and there is a stylized painting of the brick house with me as a little girl of about six out in front of it done by some Texas artist from an old snapshot. Winston had donated both the snapshot and the money for the painting. How like him, and yet he never told me about it.

I was amazed at the wealth of material they had and they have only been in existence for two years. The tiny thin slippers of Southern belles of the 1850's. Marshall is an old, old town, and the small waist and delicate lace for pink taffeta gowns belonging to Lucy Holcomb, Marshall's most glamorous lady of those days.

The original papers of Governor Ed Clark (Texas) who had taken over the Governorship. Sam Houston was lucked out of his office for refusing to take Texas in its Confederacy. The little guide told me there were no duplicates to these personal papers and I could see Dorothy Territo getting the shivers. Marshall had been for a short period the capital of the State of Missouri, believe it or not, during the tumultuous times of the Civil War, and there was a lot of memorabilia about that-- there was Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar's sword. I was amazed at how many of the old names I remembered--Starr, and Key, and Pierce. It was really a journey into yesterday and right in the middle of it, of course,

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

inevitably someone appeared in front of me and said, "remember me Claudia?" Alas, I didn't and I wonder if she would have remembered me, if nothing at all hadn't identified me. It was one delicious moment when I came upon the candy case from Daddy's store and I saluted their get-up and go for having saved it from some junk pile. I took a few minutes out to hear six local men, including Mr. Richard Blalock, to tell me about an urban renewal project Marshall was planning. And then, just as I was going out, who should I run into but Bill Moyers' mother, beaming and telling me they were all coming home for Christmas. We embraced each other and I told her that I thought it had been a great exhibit about Bill--a big piece of memorabilia especially magazine cover upon which his face appeared and the title "Our Man in Washington." At the door there was a cluster of folks, both black and white. We shook hands, greeted everybody, told them how nice it was to be back, and then we were on our way to the last and much looked forward to event of the day--a cocktail party at Phillip and Merty's. Finally after sixteen or more years of marriage, they had moved into a house of their own and a charming one it turned out to be. Merty and Philip and all their four children dressed up and looking adorable, were on hand to meet us and a group of my old friends gathered together on about twenty-four hours notice--perhaps fifty or sixty people during the course of the next two hours. I made the circle of the living room, family room, and den, and then began cornering friends for a quite talk on the sofa. Tommy Solomon, with whom I used to have dates at the University

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

of Texas, and a philosophic, mellow, interesting person I think he's become. He and his nice wife told me about their large number of children, and Harold Solomon and his wife and Sarah Taylor from Jefferson, and Tommy's wife, told me Susan was going to school and she felt very much better, and Ruth Lester--full of news of the museum in Jefferson, and Franklin Jones and his wife, our frequent political enemies and sometimes friends, especially when we are down and out, which we must be now because he told me he really didn't think we had to worry--where have those liberals got to go, the Republicans will nominate Nixon or Reagan or worse, and they will all have to come home to Lyndon. Doris and Hugh and Velma and Diane--looking very sleek and stylish--and telling me about the Marshall Symphony and Dudley wanting to know about Luci. It was all such fun and so easily the gulf of thirty odd years which most of them would bridge. Georgia and Russell Lassinger, who owns a small East Texas newspaper close by were there and Russell looking like a genial gnome was going click, click, click with his camera while I, with a mouthful of ham or cheese looked like a chipmunk. I was reaching for my glass. I was exclaiming over a friend I hadn't seen since Marshall High School days in '28. Finally I just said, "Russell, let's just get all of the good pictures you want and then let's us both come to the party." The Hackneys were there briefly because he was MC at the Marshall National Bank party that night, and there faces dimly remembered--bright and clear. I kept on

Thursday, December 14 (Continued)

telling Dorothy Territo that the Scotts or the Baldwins are so and so, used to know my Mother and Daddy before I was born, or when I was three or four, or in High School.

Finally about 7:30 I made my goodbye and we drove to the Shreveport Airport and as at every entrance or exit all day, there were the Marshall newspaper reporters--two young girls. I had told their boss, Mr. Woody, they had done a good job and he had told me that he felt sure he could deliver Harrison County for Lyndon.

We flew to Austin. The weather for the last thirty minutes worsened and became increasingly bumpy. Dorothy was quite worried, but I was encased in a cotton wall of satisfaction and pleasant memories. I reached Luci's and Pat's about ten o'clock. It is wonderful to have a place to lay my head here in Austin, to look at Patrick in slumberland, and went happily to sleep in their comfortable and pleasant guest room.