

IN THE EARLY afternoon of Sunday, Aug. 27, 1908, an elderly gentleman mounted a horse and rode through Johnson City, Texas. He hailed his neighbors with the greeting, "This morning a United States Senator was born—my grandson."

The grandson, Lyndon Baines Johnson, not only fulfilled the prophecy of Samuel Ealy Johnson, Sr., his grandfather, but went beyond it to become the youngest majority leader in the history of the United States Senate and last year was elected Vice President of the United States.

On the snowy day he was inaugurated as Vice President, he and his wife Lady Bird looked out into the sea of faces and felt the threads of their lives coming together in a single fabric.

Mrs. Johnson told me, "Somewhere in the crowd was Lyndon's first-grade teacher, Mrs. Loney, known as 'Miss Katie,' and Professor H. M. Green, who taught him government at Southwest State Teachers' College in San Marcos, Texas. Friends were there, too, from the days when he got his first taste of prominence as the 27-year-old National Youth Administrator for Texas—even Bishop Arthur McKinstry, who married us on Nov. 17, 1934, in St. Marks' Chapel, San Antonio."

To know the Vice President, we must see him with Lady Bird, his beguiling and intelligent wife, and with 17-year-old Lynda Bird and 14-year-old Lucy Baines, his effervescent daughters. We must see him, too, both as the man he is and as the boy and young man he was.

As effervescent as his daughters, he'll come home with an urgent, "Where's Mrs. Johnson? I want to kiss Mrs. Johnson." Or, "Where are my little daughters?" Impetuous, he has schooled Lady Bird to expect the unexpected and to act impromptu when he calls at the 11th hour to say, "I'm bringing six guests for dinner."

Welding an LBJ Team

His wish commands the Johnson household. It has been this way ever since the couple met at the home of Mrs. Gene Lasseter, a mutual friend, and Lyndon Johnson pursued his "Bird," as he calls her, in a whirlwind courtship. When she first demurred because of his haste, he protested, "Then you don't love me." He made her prove that she did. That very day they stood at the altar.

In the early days of their marriage, he instructed his wife to learn all the counties in his congressional district and the names of as many constituents as she could. A reliable weather vane of possible reactions to his ideas, she has also worked on his speeches, answered the phone in the middle of the night to hear the woes of an anxious constituent, and taken dictation at two in the morning. As Mrs. A. T. Thomas, Jr., her cousin, puts it: "Lyndon always had drive and endless ambition. Lady Bird had the ability to accomplish what he wanted. He intensified her own drive and ambition."

With his "little daughters," as he calls them, he is both an affectionate companion and a busy, preoccupied father who inspires them to call him "sir." Just three days before his inauguration, for instance, he took the time to take Lynda Bird to New York to buy her a suit for the ceremony after she ripped the one she had planned to use.

Johnson is interested in every detail about the girls' appearance. He himself will order 14 suits at a time from his tailor. His girls, too, must have the best of everything and as much as they like. Johnson wears contact lenses; Lynda must have them, too. Since his heart attack, he has counted

calories. His girls should do the same. He even offered them \$30 each to lose weight.

Johnson is what might be termed a "natural politician." He is a great handshaker, not only because it's good politics but because he genuinely likes people.

When he toured Asia, for example, he refused to isolate himself in an air-conditioned limousine. He also made it his business to have roadside chats with bystanders. "I wanted to press palms and feel the flesh," he explained.

In Karachi, Pakistan, the Vice President acted in typically human fashion when a reporter with the Johnson party received news that his 18-year-old son had been killed in an automobile accident. Lady Bird was visiting a hospital when the news came, and the Vice President, who usually relies upon her in such matters, had to act alone. Immediately upon receiving the news, he started a



The Vice President's fair ladies: daughters Lucy Baines (left), Lynda Bird, and wife Lady Bird.

collection for a fund in the dead boy's memory. Then, through the American ambassador, Johnson located a Karachi boy of the same age who had lost his leg and used the memorial fund to outfit this boy with a new limb.

In an Indian village, the Vice President gave the natives a lesson in progress. Seeing a man hauling water out of a well with a rope, he stepped forward and pulled the bucket up himself. "The reason I did this," he told the crowd, "is that 40 years ago in Texas we used to do just that. We used to burn our hands with the rope. Today it is different. We brought electrification to our farms, and our hands don't have to burn. You can have this kind of future, too. That is why I'm telling you about it." And as the interpreter spelled out the Vice President's words, the crowd showed that it understood.

The Vice President is a man who can not only give advice but take it—and improve on it. When he suffered a heart attack and was a patient at the Bethesda Naval Hospital, he followed doctors' orders and even went a step further. When the doctors limited his intake of calories to 1,500, he decided on 1,200. When they wanted him to reduce

from 200 to 180 pounds, he set his goal at 170.

A chain smoker before the attack, he had pleaded in an ambulance rushing him to the hospital: "Take away my seat in the Senate, do anything, but don't take cigarettes away from me." Yet when he faced the reality of the heart attack, he stopped smoking and kept a package of cigarettes at his bedside table just to test himself. He hasn't smoked since.

Johnson's working day has often merged into a working night. Striving for the best, he says that he has often had "to settle for the possible." Yet he has always aimed to make the possible the best. To do so, he has driven himself and others hard, taking time for few small pleasures.

He finds pleasure in things mechanical, as befits the chairman of the President's Advisory Council on Outer Space. At the LBJ Ranch, for instance, he has had a loudspeaker installed, with music piped into every room. He indulges a hi-fi enthusiasm, showing a greater interest in the mechanism than the music.

Johnson loves good conversation, and his own abounds in humor and colloquial expressions as Texan as his drawl or his cowboy hat. He has an irrepressible sense of humor and, as Lynda Bird says, "The papers print Daddy's jokes as facts."

Even during his hospitalization, his humor came through. When Lady Bird told him that a tailor who was making two suits for him wanted to know what to do about them, he replied, "Tell him to go ahead with the blue suit. We can use it no matter what happens."

From ABC's to Silver Star

In Johnson City, where the Vice President was born to a family of politicians, government administrators, teachers, and ministers, he showed early that his grandfather's prediction might come true. Before he was two, he learned the alphabet from ABC blocks. At three, he could recite not only Mother Goose rhymes but poems by Tennyson. At four, he could read. When his mother read the Bible, history, and mythology to him, he showed what was to be his lifelong passion for the facts. "Is it true? Did it really happen?" he would ask.

School, however, had no allure for him. When his mother discovered that he had not prepared his lessons, she would place the textbook on the breakfast table. Then she and her husband would talk about the subject. Listening to them, young Lyndon had no choice but to learn. Then, following him to the front gate, his mother would continue this bootleg instruction by chatting about history, geography, and algebra. So Lyndon would arrive at school—prepared.

When high school was over, however, he ran away from home to escape his parents' insistence that he go to college. After his funds ran out, he returned to Johnson City to take a job in a road gang. His parents, knowing that he shoveled gravel and pushed a wheelbarrow on the highway, dreamed he'd "outgrow" his rebellion. After several months of hard work in the blazing sun, he did. If college was the way to become someone, then he would go to college, he decided.

There was no money for tuition. Borrowing \$75 on his own note to get started at Southwest State Teachers' College, he continued to support himself there as school janitor and secretary to the college president. Yet at the same time he studied intensively, became a leader in campus politics and debate, and rehearsed his rhetoric as he swept. Within

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