

A Russell of the Russells of Georgia

WHEN RICHARD BREVARD RUSSELL JR. was a boy growing up just after the start of the century barefoot and in overalls in a sleepy Georgia farm town, he would often play alone for hours in a big field near his home, carrying a long stick that had been carved to resemble a rifle. Sometimes he would run headlong across the field brandishing the rifle, fall as if wounded, then leap to his feet, pick up the rifle, wave to rally his troops back to the charge, and run forward again. Sometimes he would station himself inside a little circle of wooden planks set atop a low mound of dirt he had piled in the middle of the field, and aim the rifle out as if he was defending a fort.

To friends curious about the long hours Richard spent at the game, Richard's family explained that the boy loved to play at war, but although there was a war in newspaper headlines at the time—the Russo-Japanese War—that was not the war he was fighting, nor was it war in general but a single war in which he was interested. The charges he was re-enacting were the screaming rush of Longstreet's brigades at the Second Manassas and Pickett's last forlorn charge at Gettysburg. The fort he had built he had named Fort Lee. The cause for which he fought was the Lost Cause.

Richard Russell's boyhood imagination was bound up in that cause—and so was his entire life.

His roots were bound up in it—in the lost dream of the Old South that was crushed at Gettysburg and at Antietam and Vicksburg and Appomattox. His ancestors were part of the upper reaches of the slave-owning patrician aristocracy that dominated the South's plantation culture and embodied its social graces. The Russells, of English background, had owned plantations in Georgia and South Carolina since Colonial times; Richard's grandfather established a successful cotton mill near Marietta, Georgia, and married a Brevard, one of the North Carolina Brevards.

But, like so much of that aristocracy, Richard's family was ruined by the War Between the States: the mill lay in Sherman's path and was burned down to its brick chimney and floor, while the Russell slaves were freed by Sherman's troops; Richard's grandmother fled in a carriage driven by a slave named Monday Russell (for the day of the week on which he was born), who during Reconstruction became a member of the State Legislature; and the family was plunged into poverty. Like so much of that aristocracy, Richard's family never recovered. It was still an impoverished family when his father, who was descended, as *Eminent Georgians* noted, "from the oldest and choicest American stock," was born.

Richard Brevard Russell Sr. yearned to restore the family's name and fortune, and for a time it seemed he would do so. Tall and handsome, a brilliant student at the University of Georgia, from which he graduated at eighteen with a command of five languages, including Latin and Greek, he graduated from law school at nineteen, almost immediately won a reputation as a young lawyer of "remarkable ability," and was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives at twenty-one as its youngest member. There he quickly established himself as what one writer called "the champion of Georgia's institutions of higher learning," leading legislative efforts to establish the state's first technological college and first women's college.

Leaving the Legislature at twenty-seven, he was elected solicitor general, or prosecuting attorney, for a seven-county judicial circuit, and would later be elected judge of a succession of Georgia courts, including its Supreme Court—of which he was Chief Justice for sixteen years. He was highly respected as a judge both for "the brilliance of his mind" and for his diligence ("On more than one occasion," an admirer wrote, "the Chief Justice was known to have worked and labored all night long"); indeed, some of his judicial opinions were called "gems of legal literature."

But he was not satisfied to be a judge; "always looking," as one writer put it, "for larger fields to conquer," he wanted to be Governor or United States Senator—"the Senate post was the one he wanted most." Richard Russell Sr. could not be politic, however. As a prosecutor his "fearless" disregard of political considerations had angered local politicians. A booming, eloquent stump speaker, he would never deign to moderate his views, "speaking his mind bluntly no matter whom he angered." Some of his positions were regarded in Georgia as "radical" or even "socialist," including his insistence that all qualified students (white students, of course) be able to attend the University of Georgia regardless of ability to pay; "the poorest students" should "have an equal chance with the richest," he said. His bluntness and independence alienated the three or four powerful factions that dominated Georgia politics, so his dreams of higher office were unrealistic. But he pursued them anyway, with a fervor that, as a biographer says, "got in the way of practical considerations, and even of common sense." He ran for Governor twice, for Senator once,

as well as for Congress twice, and lost each time—usually by humiliatingly large margins.

For these ambitions, it was not he alone who sacrificed. Shortly after he married Ina Dillard, a schoolteacher from Athens, Georgia, who loved the intellectual life of the University of Georgia community, he informed her that they were moving to the tiny farm hamlet of Winder in Barrow County, twenty miles out in the country, because residence there “would be politically advantageous . . . or so he believed.” Ina, recounts Russell’s biographer Gilbert C. Fite, was “distraught” over the move, but a few years later, the Russells moved even further into the country, into a larger, rambling white frame house about a mile and a half outside the town. The second move was made necessary by the number of Russell children; Ina was to spend much of the first twenty years of her marriage pregnant; she would eventually give birth to fifteen children, thirteen of whom grew to maturity. Attempting to curry political favor with some newly formed county, the Judge would temporarily name his latest child after it.

The lives of the thirteen Russell children—seven boys and six girls—were filled with their father’s dreams and defeats. “I was brought up hearing about his political campaigns, or observing them,” Richard Jr. was to recall. It was a boyhood decorated with the trappings of privilege; the Russell children were taught by a governess in their own “private school”; the Legislature incorporated the area around the new house as the town of Russell; the Seaboard Railroad established a tiny station there, not far from the house—on mornings on which the Judge had to travel to court in Atlanta, one of the children would station himself at a curve about half a mile away to wave his handkerchief to flag the train down. Catching a glimpse of the train, he would shout, “Round the curve! Round the curve!” The word would be relayed by another child to the house, where Judge Russell sat regally at his table, refusing to be rushed through his breakfast, and then, at the very last moment, the Judge, a lordly figure—still tall and erect, with a flowing mustache and a full head of black hair—would stride out to the station, still holding his coffee cup. Often he would not get there quite in time, and the train would be passing the station, but he would wave at the engineer, who would put on his brakes and then back the train up so that the Judge could board, taking a last sip as he stepped aboard and handed the cup down to one of his children.

But the trappings were threadbare. The Russells lived in near poverty. In an attempt to augment his meagre judicial salary, the Judge purchased land, and moved in six black sharecroppers, and operated a tiny “commissary” to sell them goods. The firmest of believers in the Old South, his attitude toward these black families is perhaps summed up in the remark made—admirably—by one of his daughters that “he might have been a typical plantation owner if he had been born a generation or two earlier.” But he seemed never to finish the year with a profit. Intermittently, mired in debts, he had to resign from the bench to pay them off; so highly prized were his skills as an attorney that he was always

able to do so, but invariably, as soon as he did, he returned to the bench, and to his unsuccessful attempts to win some other, higher, office. The Russells had few servants, and with Judge Russell usually away in Atlanta, the burden of raising thirteen children fell on their mother. Unable to afford clothing for them, she made most of it herself, sewing late into the night by the light of an oil lamp; recalling his mother’s endless drudgery, Richard Jr. was to say that he was ten years old before he saw his mother asleep; previously, he had “thought that mothers never had to sleep.” “My mother,” he was to say, “was the greatest woman I’ve ever known.”

The relationship between father and mother was warm and loving. Ina believed that her husband’s abilities justified his ambition, and that surely he would become Governor or Senator and have a chance to prove his greatness. And she shared as well his determination to restore the family to its rightful place in Georgia. Richard Russell adored his wife. After they had been married for almost forty years, he sent her a note saying, “With a sense of love and gratitude that is overpowering, I can only say God bless you, idol of my heart.”

The family as a whole was unusually close. The big white frame house seemed always to be filled with the children’s friends and numerous cousins. And the children idolized their gruff father for his independence and adherence to principle; they remembered with pride the night a gang of men, angered by one of his political positions and unaware that he was away in Atlanta, drove around in circles in front of the house shouting threats and singing “Hang Dick Russell from a sour apple tree” while young Dick and his brothers lay on the roof with shotguns ready to defend their house. The Judge was usually in Atlanta all week, but when the train squealed to a stop on Friday evenings, and he stepped off, there would be parties in the front parlor, with the Judge doing clog dances and singing what one daughter remembers as “those funny songs” while his wife played the piano and the children sang along. No child could go to bed without a big kiss good night, “although,” as another daughter recalls, “they squirmed as his huge coffee-and-tobacco-stained mustache scratched them.”

Within this large circle of love and warmth, there was one very special relationship: between the father and his eldest son. The birth—on November 2, 1897—of a male heir was a great event to a father with a strong sense of family. His first three children had been girls, and he had vowed that if necessary he would populate Georgia with girls until he sired a son; when his fourth child was a boy, he thought, “My own R. B. Russell, Jr.—I was crazy with happiness.” He said then what he was to repeat many times: “That is me living all over again.”

He early began taking the boy on trips: to Savannah, to see the Civil War forts and cannon emplacements, and to sites of particular meaning to the Russell family: to “where Grandpa’s slaves are buried,” as the boy put it; to the mill that had been destroyed—and with it the Russells’ patrimony. Quiet and seri-

ous, the boy loved reading ("I read all morning," he wrote at the age of nine in the diary he kept in a school composition notebook), particularly history ("I like to read histories of all countries") and more particularly still Civil War history; he seemed never to tire of listening to the stories told by the Confederate veterans who stationed themselves every day in front of the Winder general store. His father would sit with him on the broad front porch of the Russell home discussing history and the Lost Cause for hours on end. And, early also, he made the boy aware of his special role—as heir to his name—in his shining dream of restoring the Russells to their rightful place.

From the time he was sent away to boarding school at the age of thirteen, Richard Brevard Russell Jr. was reminded of his responsibility in a steady stream of letters. "You are my oldest son and you carry my full name," the Judge wrote once. "You can have—and *you must have*—a future of usefulness and distinction in Georgia or it will break my heart. . . . My son—my namesake—*never* let this thought leave your mind and may it influence your every act." On Richard Jr.'s fifteenth birthday, his father wrote: "Son I swear you to carry on my work and fulfill what I leave undone." You "can make the name of R. B. Russell live long after I die and thus you will help to keep me alive." The theme was echoed by the youth's mother, who wrote him, "I'm always expecting my R. B. Russell, Jr., never to fail in anything." ("She wrote letters that would make you feel ashamed," Richard would recall when he was an old man. " 'You're Richard Russell, and you can do anything. If you don't do it, it's just your own fault.' She had so much confidence in me, and predicted such great things for me that in a way it was a challenge to me"), and the theme was echoed by his brothers and sisters, who urged their sibling not to do anything at school that might sully the family name. One sister wrote that she hoped he was behaving himself "becomingly"; she herself, she said, could never do anything "unbecoming" if she just paused "long enough to think whose child I am."

As defeat followed defeat for the father—after one, Ina wrote to Richard Jr., "Oh, how it hurt"—he shifted more and more of the burden of the family's dreams to his namesake. "You bear my name," he wrote his son after one gubernatorial defeat, "and I want you to carry it higher than I have ever done or can do in my few remaining days."

The quiet youth admired—revered—the imposing, elegant figure whom he had, on visits to Atlanta, watched dispensing justice from the bench. When Richard Jr. was old, having sat in the United States Senate for thirty-eight years listening to great Senate orators, he would say that "the finest speech I ever heard" was an extemporaneous talk his father had once given to the Georgia Bar Association. And he accepted, without reservation, his responsibility in the father's dream. Among the diary entries of his ninth year, the year in which his father lost his first race for Governor, is: "I expect to be Governor some day." When he was fourteen, and his father wrote him in despair after his second

gubernatorial defeat, the youth wrote him back to tell him to be of good cheer: "It is too bad we got beat but we will try again." "He seemed," says Gilbert Fite, "to take it for granted that he would achieve the greatness that his father hoped for him." After graduating from the University of Georgia, and its law school, he rejected invitations to join the big Atlanta law firms and entered law practice with his father—"Russell & Russell" was painted on a second-floor window in the People's Bank Building in Winder—moving back into the big white Russell house ("almost as if he had never been gone"). At the first opportunity, in 1921, when he was twenty-three, "young Dick," as he now was called, ran for state representative, and won. And as soon as he reached the Legislature, he revealed that he possessed not only the willingness to pick up his father's banner, but the ability as well.

HIS RISE TO LEADERSHIP in the Legislature was remarkably rapid—in part, perhaps, because, much as he loved and admired his father, he had absorbed lessons from his father's failed career.

Richard Russell Jr. was just over six feet tall, slender, but with broad shoulders, and, like his father, he held himself very straight. His face was the face of a young aristocrat: long, and appearing even longer because his hairline was already receding, with a large, hawked nose of the type known as "Roman," and a mouth that always smiled pleasantly, if seldom, broadly or enthusiastically. And the aristocratic aura was intensified by his habit of tilting his head slightly back, as if he was looking down that large nose. When he spoke in the Legislature, he stood even more stiffly erect than usual, with the extended fingers of one hand resting firmly on the top of the desk before him. And he spoke in a resonant, ringing voice.

He could be as memorable an orator as his father, particularly when he was speaking on that topic that had captured his imagination; describing one of his speeches, a newspaper said, "His tribute to noble women of the Lost Cause was great, while he did not forget the private soldier who on the bloody fields of the South so nobly illustrated the courage and chivalry of these great people." While he possessed his father's eloquence, however, he was much more sparing in its use. His speeches were rare. And also in contrast to the mustachioed old campaigner, whose blunt and controversial stands had aroused so much antagonism, Russell, as Fite puts it, "was careful not to jump out in front" on issues, since "the point man always . . . made enemies." It was not on the floor of the Legislature but in the Atlanta hotel rooms in which the legislators sat around and chatted in the evenings that he began to make a mark.

In those hotel rooms, his voice was a soft, friendly, musical southern drawl. Yet the friendliness did not often—if ever—lead to familiarity. Already, at twenty-three, there was a dignity and reserve about Dick Russell that set him off from other men. When arguments arose, he would listen to both sides with

grave, thoughtful attention. He never volunteered an opinion; if asked for one, he would give it with a quiet objectivity striking to those who knew his fiery, impulsive father. Although he was one of the youngest of forty so-called Young Turks—many of them World War I veterans, most of them college-educated and embarrassed by Georgia's "redneck" image—who had arrived in the Legislature in 1921, they began coming to him to settle disputes. The judiciousness and fairness with which he analyzed both sides and calmly delivered an opinion won him his peers' respect, and he was soon their acknowledged leader.

In 1922, his sixty-one-year-old father ran for Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, a post for which he had been defeated years before. This time, however, he had an asset he had not possessed in his first attempt: the legislators all over the state who were his son's friends. Richard Jr. worked very hard in this campaign, and his father won. But in 1926, Fite says, "Dick had to undergo the embarrassment and sadness of his father making another unsuccessful, some said foolish, campaign." Without resigning as Chief Justice, Richard Russell Sr. ran for the job he had always most wanted: United States Senator. He was running against the beloved and redoubtable Walter George, and even his son's network of friends could not help him. And the Judge was making one campaign too many: newspapers ridiculed him as "an old stager and stump artist," "a tragedy" who "had been feeding at the public trough all his life."

Aware though Dick was of the futility of the effort, no son could have tried harder for a father, managing the campaign and speaking all over the state; his youngest brother would never forget "a great bit of courage" when, at a big rally near Kirkwood, hired thugs threatened to storm the platform on which Dick was speaking, and with clenched fists Dick dared them to come up and fight. But his father polled only 61,000 votes to George's 128,000.

The next year, Dick, at the age of twenty-nine, was nominated for Speaker of the Georgia House by a colleague who said, "Though young in years, his demeanor has shown him to be a leader." No one ran against him. A year after the father's hopes had been crushed in a final humiliation, his son had become a leading figure in the state.

WHEN HE WAS SPEAKER, other traits became apparent. One was an integrity and independence that became a byword in Atlanta. Powerful lobbying groups had become accustomed to dictating the membership of key House committees, and one "prominent citizen" now approached Russell and held out a list of names, saying, "These are the persons we would like to see appointed to committees." Russell did not extend his hand to take the list. He told the lobbyist that he would be better advised not to give it to him: any man whose name was on it, he said in that quiet voice, would never be appointed to a committee, even if Russell himself had previously been planning to appoint him. "Dick Russell

is the closest thing I've seen to an honest politician," a Georgia legislator said. Not only would he "tell you if it's impossible to get what you want," he would "tell you if he doesn't think you should be asking for what you want."

He also had the ability, so lacking in his father, to persuade men to cooperate and unite behind his aims. Georgia's decades-long governmental disorganization had reached a level of chaos that seemed to defy solution, with no fewer than 102 departments, boards, bureaus and commissions, each capable of mobilizing a constituency to resist change, with duplicating functions and salaries, and no semblance of central budgetary controls or of control over expenditures, which annually exceeded revenues by so much that for three years the state had been unable to pay many of its bills. Not only was the public school system inadequate, many students could not even afford to buy textbooks, so high were prices kept by a legislatively sanctioned "schoolbook trust." And a "bond crew" whose hold over the Legislature was well-known in Georgia saw to it that the state repeatedly passed huge bond issues, which drained its revenues to make highway contractors and politicians rich while the state's highway system became more and more outdated. Russell proposed paying for new highways not by bonds but by a gasoline tax, which could provide money also for the schools. But he didn't make the proposals publicly. He "liked to work things out in private." He let others make suggestions, and supported them, and let them think the ideas came from them. When there were differences of opinion, he mediated between them, and a solid front was maintained. The supposedly unstoppable bond issue was stopped—and replaced with a gasoline tax, the revenues earmarked for education. Russell, a legislator said, was the type of "leader who leads without one's consciousness of his leadership." He always gave credit to others. And his colleagues, as this legislator said, had come to "love him and trust him." In 1930, at the age of thirty-two, Russell entered the race for Governor.

THREE OF THE STATE'S most prominent politicians, each with a well-financed statewide organization headquartered in Atlanta, were already running for the post. Russell had neither organization nor money; his campaign, run out of a small store in Winder, was financed mainly with a thousand dollars he borrowed on a life insurance policy. He was mocked by his opponents as "the schoolboy candidate" because of his age, or as "the Boy Scout candidate" because of his emphasis on honesty in government, and by the press, which called his campaign "small-town" because it did not have an Atlanta office. In fact, his candidacy was not taken seriously at first, with political observers and press concurring that he had entered the race only "to get his name before the people" in preparation for a later, more serious, campaign. But to reports that he was trailing so badly that he would drop out of the campaign, he replied that "nothing save death" would make him drop out. Though he didn't have a for-

mal campaign organization, he had his family. There may have been newspapers, and politicians, in Georgia who ridiculed his father, but there were also people throughout the state who remembered the old Judge, and respected him, and who wanted to help his son—so many of them that there was almost an informal statewide network of support. The Winder campaign headquarters was a family operation. Dick's younger brother Robert E. Lee Russell was the campaign's public relations man; Dick's other brothers and sisters typed letters and manned the phones. They worked very hard; they all knew, as Dick knew, that he wasn't running only for himself. And he had friends: while in many of the state's counties he knew few voters, in each county there was at least one person who knew *him*—the county's legislator. Of the politicians who knew Richard Russell best—the state's legislators—fully ninety percent were supporting him.

And he had himself. Forty years later, sitting on the porch in Winder and reminiscing about that gubernatorial race, he would say, "No man has ever worked as I did," traveling from one dusty Georgia town to another in a battered old Oldsmobile coupe, giving twelve, fifteen speeches a day, sleeping in the car's back seat or in friends' houses because he couldn't afford hotels.

In other ways, too, he was an untraditional candidate. In Georgia, it was said, "the rustics rule," and the typical candidate therefore tried to make the farmers—"the woolhat boys," "the one-gallus boys," "the red-suspender boys"—believe he was one of them. Richard Brevard Russell Jr. was not one of them, and he would not pretend that he was. He was a Russell of the Russells of Georgia, and he wore a white shirt, and a necktie, and a suit, and, except on the hottest days, he would not remove his jacket when talking to a crowd of farmers. And while he joked with the farmers, in a wonderfully friendly way, in the words of one observer he "never used poor English or engaged in emotional tirades against far-off interests who were oppressing the farmer," and he would not tone down his classical or biblical allusions; asked about one opponent, Russell said he "made Ananias look like a man of great integrity."

And somehow the farmers didn't seem to mind that he hadn't undone his tie or taken off his jacket. "Russell sincerely believed that farming was a superior way of life," as his biographer Fite puts it. "A true Jeffersonian, he emphasized that the nation's purity and stability, and its economic strength, depended on its farmers." And, Fite writes, "farmers seemed to appreciate his direct, honest approach to their problems. . . . He did not promise to do things for them that were impossible. . . . He refused to make unrealistic promises. Farmers responded to his friendly but somewhat reserved manner, his realism, and his integrity."

And so did the state as a whole, which was coming to understand the affection and respect with which his colleagues regarded the clean-cut, earnest young politician. As "Russell met more and more people, his personality began to play a vital role in his growing strength," Fite says. "People just liked Dick

Russell." In the first primary, he received more votes than any of the three veteran politicians, and in the runoff against one of them (whose campaign, Russell said dryly, should be referred to with reverence "as one should do in speaking of the dead"), he won by the largest majority recorded by any gubernatorial candidate in the state's history.

When he was sworn in, in front of the State Capitol in Atlanta, on June 27, 1931, Richard Brevard Russell Jr. became, at thirty-three, the youngest Governor in the history of Georgia. His left hand rested on the family Bible, which was held by the Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, a tall, white-haired and white-mustached old man in an old-fashioned wing collar. As the Judge recited the oath—the oath he had wanted so desperately, for so long, to take himself—the new Governor stood opposite him, at rigid attention, staring into his father's eyes. His right hand, upraised to take the oath, was held so high it might almost have been a salute.

RUSSELL WAS AN UNCONVENTIONAL GOVERNOR. He conducted gubernatorial business only until about four o'clock in the afternoon, and then, closing the door to his private office, began what, in his biographer's words, "he considered his real work." Part of that work was answering mail. Routine correspondence was disposed of by his assistants, but if a letter, whether from a prominent figure or a farmer, dealt in any depth with a governmental issue, Russell insisted on answering it—in detail—himself. And part of the work was reading: novels (Borodino was almost as real to him as Gettysburg, so many times had he reread *War and Peace*: decades later, during a tour of Russia, he would be guided around that battlefield by an expert on the battle, who realized, as he was talking with this American, that he was talking to another expert), biographies, works of history: Roman historians and Greek historians, and English—Livy and Thucydides and Macaulay—works that described how kings and emperors and prime ministers had handled issues. And of course anything at all—anything and everything—that was written on the War Between the States. This work went on for hours. Russell dated women frequently, although, as had been the case during his legislative days (and, in fact, during his college and law school days), whenever one of the romances threatened to become serious, he broke it off. But on many evenings, he did not go out at all. "The lights glow at midnight through the windows of the Governor's office," a reporter wrote—glowed as they had once glowed in the office of the Governor's father.

The governorship of Richard Russell became one of the most significant periods in Georgia's history. Taking office with the state broke, and with tax revenues so eroded by the Depression that it was unable to meet its obligations to public schools and public institutions or to pay the pensions it owed its veterans, he almost immediately secured passage of the Russell Reorganization

Act, which reduced the number of agencies from 102 to 18, and imposed on the eighteen department heads budget controls so strict (while simultaneously creating the state's first central purchasing agency, and requiring that no purchase be made except on the basis of sealed bids) that within eighteen months the state had not only paid its obligations to schools, institutions, and veterans, but had also reduced its total debt by more than a third. He launched the construction of major highways and broke the power of the schoolbook trust. And, convinced that the impoverished state must cease relying so heavily on its cotton crop, the new Governor somehow found funds for agricultural research—establishing laboratories, for example, to develop a tomato-plant industry, and to find new uses for Georgia's extensive pine forests—that would improve the state's economy for generations to come.

These achievements were based on the same techniques he had employed as House Speaker. He neither publicized his ideas nor pressed them on legislative committees; he would, he promised one committee chairman, "get squarely behind the plan of reorganization that you finally decide on." This was a tough job, he wrote the chairman, "but you are equal to it and when it is completed you will have rendered a real service to the state." He would "flatter, cajole, encourage and support others to get out in front to achieve a desired goal," Fite explains. "Russell had a knack for making other people feel important," for giving credit to others; "he led without people realizing that the action was his rather than their own." Within eighteen months, many of his goals had been achieved. The opinion of the *Atlanta Constitution*—"A new day for Georgia"—was a reflection of the attitude throughout the state toward its youthful Governor.

Yet eighteen months was to be his total term as Governor. In 1932, the state's senior United States Senator, William J. Harris, suddenly died of a heart attack. Russell called a special election for September, and announced he would be running in it—for the post his father had "wanted most." His opponent was United States Representative Charles Crisp, Dean of Georgia's congressional delegation, acting Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and member of one of Georgia's most powerful political families. "He'll be the worst defeated man you ever saw," Richard Russell told reporters.

In this campaign, Russell showed his courage (he was hurled through the windshield of his car in an automobile accident, and his upper lip was torn open from one end to the other and four of his teeth knocked out; putting the teeth in his pocket, and fastening his lip down with adhesive tape, he continued campaigning without canceling a single speech). And he showed as well his skill as a campaigner. To dramatize Crisp's close links with the "Power Trust" which was driving up electric bills, Russell gave him a nickname that destroyed his campaign: "Kilowatt Charlie." After a stunningly one-sided victory, the "boy wonder of Georgia politics," the man who had been the youngest Governor in the history of Georgia, became, at thirty-five, the youngest Senator of the

United States, after he was escorted down the Senate's center aisle for his swearing-in by the state's senior Senator, Walter George, who had, not so long before, humiliated his father.

RICHARD RUSSELL ROSE AS RAPIDLY in the nation's Senate as he had in his state's legislature, in part because he displayed the same quiet, polite but unbending independence in Washington as he had in Atlanta, and in part because a rare concatenation of coincidences turned that independence into an asset instead of a liability.

The moment at which Russell was sworn in to the Senate—January 12, 1933—was the moment of the greatest upheaval in its membership in modern Senate history. The Democrats had been out of power since the elections of 1918; now, thanks to the massive Depression-induced repudiation of the GOP, they were back in the majority, and sixteen of them were newly elected like Russell, the largest number of new members of one party ever to come to the Senate in a single year. So sweeping had been the ouster of incumbents that there was an unprecedented number of vacancies on major committees, so many that senior Democrats, moving at last into the chairmanships and other prominent posts they had coveted so long, were willing to forgo their right to some of these other seats. When, immediately upon Russell's arrival, Majority Leader Joseph Robinson asked him for a list of his committee preferences, Russell replied that he had only one: Appropriations. And when Robinson explained with a patronizing smile that the seniority system made a freshman's appointment to the Senate's most powerful committee extremely unlikely and asked for a second choice, Russell replied, he was to recall, that he didn't have one—that "if I can't be on Appropriations, I'd prefer not to be on any committee."

In a normal year, the result of such an ultimatum would probably have been disastrous, but Robinson was shortly to become aware that there would in fact be no fewer than five open Democratic slots on Appropriations. Nineteen thirty-three, moreover, was a year in which Louisiana's Huey Long was tormenting Robinson and disrupting the Senate with hours-long harangues and the introduction of legislation more liberal—or radical—than President Roosevelt was proposing, thus repeatedly forcing Democratic senators into uncomfortable positions. Russell's unexpected defeat of the respected Charlie Crisp, together with exaggerated descriptions of the young, reforming Governor's devastating campaign style, had given Capitol Hill a totally mistaken impression—as Russell would put it years later, still quietly laughing at the idea—that he was a second Huey Long, "a wild-spoken man like Huey." Intimidated by the prospect of a second rebellious southern demagogue raising havoc with inflammatory speeches, Robinson decided, as Russell was to put it, "to buy his peace with me"—by giving him one of the five Appropriations

seats.* And hardly had Russell been put on Appropriations when, through an even rarer coincidence, he was made chairman of one of its most important subcommittees: the Subcommittee on Agricultural Appropriations. Seniority would have given that post to the subcommittee's senior Democratic member, Cotton Ed Smith of South Carolina, but the cantankerous Smith had for years been engaged in a bitter feud with Appropriations Chairman Carter Glass. And Glass had quickly become fond of Dick Russell. "Old Ed Smith thinks he's gonna get it, but he's not worth a damn and I'm not going to give it him," Glass told Russell. Instead, he told Russell, he was giving it to *him*. In a normal year, Glass wouldn't have been able to do this, and, had Smith insisted on the seniority rule, Glass wouldn't have been able to do it now, but Smith, perhaps because he had just received not only the chairmanship of the full Agriculture Committee, for which he had long yearned, but also three other key Standing Committee memberships—no one can any longer recall the reason—was willing to be placated with *ex officio* membership on the subcommittee.

This concatenation of one of the greatest upheavals in Senate history with one of the most bitter feuds in Senate history had placed Russell at one of the narrows of senatorial power, one of the strategic passages through which bills, great and small, had to pass before they could emerge into the broader waters of the full Appropriations Committee, and from there onto the Senate floor. In 1933, one-third of the nation's families still lived on farms, and agricultural appropriations were vital to almost every senator not only because of the big programs—the New Deal's AAA, soil conservation, crop rotation, parity, and the like—which affected farmers en masse, but because of the small programs, minor items tucked away in the vast Agriculture Department budget, that were not minor at all to a senator's constituents, and therefore to a senator's future: laboratories for research into local crop or animal diseases; soil conservation or wildlife experimental stations; an emergency grant for funds to inoculate sheep or cattle against a fatal disease that had suddenly struck a rangeland; the creation of a salary line for a federal agricultural agent for a county that needed one. Approval of a senator's pet project by the Department of Agriculture meant only that the project was approved, not that it was funded; funding—an appropriation—had to be approved by the Appropriations Committee, and the committee almost invariably approved only appropriations previously approved by its subcommittees. At a stroke, the youngest senator had become a powerful senator.

Russell fully understood that power had come to him so quickly only by a very unusual coincidence. "I got to be [subcommittee] chairman, in my first

*Another went to Russell's fellow freshman Theodore Francis Green. They thus became two of only five senators who had received seats on Appropriations immediately after coming to the Senate. The others, all of whom were also appointed during the 1930s, were Joseph O'Mahoney and Pat McCarran (both 1934) and Republican Styles Bridges (1937).

year, which was a great rarity, because of a feud," he was to say. Having been given the power, however, he made the most of it, displaying in Washington as in Atlanta an impressive intellect—along with an equally impressive willingness to use that intellect, to devote his life to his work—that quickly gave him an unusual grasp of the workings of the national government. Most of the invitations that flooded in on a new senator—particularly a charming young bachelor—were declined; he wrote his mother that he was keeping his acceptances "to a minimum as I have to work late nearly every day." His small hotel room was big enough for a desk, and at it, as at the Governor's desk in Georgia, Richard Russell would spend evenings alone, bent over a book.

There were then twenty-two formal Senate rules; Russell memorized them—word for word. Quickly realizing that the Senate was governed more by the precedents which over the years had modified the rules than by the rules themselves, he borrowed the book of precedents from a Senate Parliamentarian, and studied it—all 1,326 pages of it—"until he knew it backward and forward." After Charlie Watkins was appointed Parliamentarian, Russell would sit in Watkins' office for hours, discussing the precedents, learning their origins and the reasoning behind them—and the ways they could be used or circumvented. Soon, senators conferring in a committee room began to realize that if they were wondering what the parliamentary procedures might be on some legislation in which they were interested, they no longer had to send for Watkins; there was someone right in the room who knew the answer. And Richard Russell, they began to realize, didn't know only the procedures; he knew the legislation—their legislation. He had studied the bills they introduced: he knew what they were trying to accomplish with them—and, not infrequently, he knew a better way to accomplish it, a way to make a subtle modification in the language, to add an amendment, to delete a clause that might cause a conflict with some other bill passed years before.

And Russell was studying more than procedures. Newspapers from all over the United States were kept in the Marble Room, so that senators could read their home-state papers. Russell would sit in the Marble Room for hours, reading newspapers from other states. Senators came to realize that he understood not only their bills but the reasons they had introduced them; he possessed a remarkably detailed knowledge of political and economic conditions in their states. And sometimes Russell would comment on some bill that had been discussed before a committee of which he was not a member; senators would realize that he was familiar with the hearings, that he must have read the transcript. A legend began to arise that Richard Russell read the entire *Congressional Record* every day.

Equally impressive was his ability with people. After he had been in the Senate for a quarter of a century, *Time* magazine was to report that "Russell does not have a single personal enemy" in it. The head was tilted back, but the blue eyes looking down from it could be warm and friendly, as was his gentle,

musical southern drawl. If he accepted you, he had a way of making you feel you belonged. Margaret Chase Smith, the lone woman senator, knew she belonged the first time Dick Russell gave her the nickname by which he would always refer to her thereafter: "Sis." He generally ate lunch at the big round community table in the senators' private dining room, and often other senators would delay their lunch until they saw Russell heading for the dining room, so that they could sit with him. The faces of senators already seated at the table would light up when they saw Dick coming to join them. That soft southern drawl could produce gleams of quiet humor, sometimes about his hairline, which by his mid-thirties had receded completely off his forehead and was inexorably making its way up his head; when a younger senator, concerned about *his* growing baldness, was having his photograph taken with Russell, and asked if they could change positions so that the camera would catch "my better side," Russell remarked, "You're lucky to still *have* a better side." He never volunteered an opinion as to what a senator should do about a problem that was troubling him, but if a senator solicited his opinion, not infrequently Russell had it already prepared—a startlingly well-informed opinion. "Well, if I were representing your state," he would say, "I guess I might think about . . ." And when Russell was unfamiliar with the problem, he would tell his colleague he would think about it—and when the senator saw Russell next, the senator could usually tell he *had* thought about it, seriously, deeply and empathetically. "In addition to being great" in many fields of legislation, recalls Sam Ervin of North Carolina, who served in the Senate with him for twenty years, "Dick Russell was great in his personal relationships. . . . He was a congenial companion, he was a man that had what I call an understanding heart, he understood the problems of other senators and other people. . . ."

If there was affection for Dick Russell, there was also respect—respect that would become exceptional, perhaps unique, within the Senate in its universality and depth.

This respect was a tribute not only to Russell's knowledge and expertise—of the Senate, of the individual states, of parliamentary procedure, of tradition and precedent—but also to the integrity with which the knowledge was employed. When a senator, wavering on a bill in which Russell was interested, asked Russell about it, he knew he would be told *all* about it. Quietly, dispassionately, Russell would make sure the senator understood not only the reasons why he should take the same position on the bill that Russell was taking, but the reasons why he should take an opposing position. Both sides of the issue would be given equal weight. Asked years later "[To] what would you attribute his ability to sway votes and opinions in the Senate?" Ervin would say: "I would attribute it to the fact that he told the truth. . . . People had so much respect in his intellectual integrity they knew that he was telling the truth when he described what the contents of a bill were or what the effects of that bill would be."

Russell's name was almost never mentioned by the press during the long, bitter fight in 1935 over Roosevelt's huge four-billion-dollar relief proposal, which had been stalled in the Senate over the demand of pro-labor senators that the government be required to pay relief workers the prevailing wage scale for private projects. But when the bill finally passed the Senate, Arthur Krock of the *New York Times* asked Roosevelt's floor leaders to give him the inside story of the fight. And after they did so, Krock reported that the real "hero of the drama" was the "very unobtrusive young man from Georgia. . . . The winning compromise in each instance was Mr. Russell's own idea."

As if displeased with even this meagre amount of publicity, Russell took further pains to cloak his Senate work in anonymity, often, after he had devised a compromise amendment, asking another senator to introduce it so that the other senator would be given the credit. So successful was he in keeping his name out of newspapers that he was frequently not even mentioned in connection with bills passed only after he had worked out the compromises which made passage possible. Within the world of the Senate, however, his ability to untangle legislative knots was widely recognized. As legislators from rural Georgia counties had come to him to air their problems, hear them analyzed, and be presented with solutions, now United States senators came to him. And, as his biographer notes, "When he spoke to them . . . they listened."

DURING HIS YEARS AS A SENATOR these abilities were placed at the service of great causes.

One was the nation's military strength. Russell was for twenty-six years either Chairman or dominant member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which oversaw the battle readiness of the nation's far-flung legions and armadas. As senators of Rome had insisted that, regardless of the cost, the legions must be kept at full complement because the peace and stability of the known world—the *Pax Romana*—depended on their strength, Russell believed that the peace and stability of his world—the *Pax Americana*—depended on America's strength. Before World War II, listening to Senate isolationists, he knew that they simply had not read their Livy or their Gibbon, and as a member for twelve years of Armed Services' predecessor Naval Affairs Committee, he had insisted that America's Navy must be strong enough to control not one but both of the world's great oceans, and had been one of the earliest senatorial advocates of the construction of the most gigantic new machine of war: the aircraft carrier. During the war, he had spent months touring the battlefields around the globe on which American soldiers were engaged; he was not impressed with the performance of America's allies. Upon his return, he told the Senate—almost every seat in the Chamber was filled during his speech—that the world was becoming smaller and that America must have a presence in all of it; the bases on foreign soil purchased "with the blood of American boys"

must be retained after the war was over. To liberal criticism—retaining the bases was inadvisable, *The New Republic* said, unless America intended to become the “greatest imperialist power of all time”—Russell replied that “call it what you will,” retaining the bases would “prevent another generation of Americans . . . from being compelled to pay again in blood and treasure in taking those islands back.” As the Romans had believed that the conquered Gauls must be made to *feel* conquered, Russell believed that the enemies of the United States must be made to feel its full vengeance; standing in the ruins of the German cities after V-E Day, he was satisfied that the Hun had felt it, but Japan must not be allowed merely to surrender, for if it was insufficiently humiliated, its “barbarism” would return; he rose in the Senate to demand that Emperor Hirohito be tried as a war criminal. When, three months later, the first atomic bombs were dropped, he exulted in the havoc they wreaked, and told Truman that if the United States did not possess more atomic bombs, “let us carry on with TNT and fire bombs until we can produce” more, and then use them—until the Japanese “are brought groveling to their knees” and “beg us” to be allowed to surrender. Even Japan’s unconditional surrender did not satisfy him; he again urged the ouster and public trial of the Emperor, and advised Truman to parade a large army through the streets of Tokyo; having Admiral William Halsey ride the Emperor’s white horse in the parade might give the “Japs” the message, he said.

In the years that followed, “There was,” a fellow senator said admiringly, “no more ardent cold warrior in Congress than Dick Russell.” Convinced that the conflict between Russia and the United States was simply a Manichean battle between evil and good, he opposed almost every suggestion for relaxing tensions or for disarmament or for a reduction in expenditures for military preparedness. Once, Senator Milton Young of North Dakota said to him, “You people in the South are much more militarily minded than in the North.” “Milt,” Russell replied, “you’d be more military minded, too, if Sherman had crossed North Dakota.” Others might see non-military foreign aid as a key to world peace; to Russell, the key was military might, and foreign aid only drained away funds that could better be spent on troops and weapons. Important though he considered governmental economy and a balanced budget, those were not the most important considerations to Russell. America’s security came first. “I want to see the planes first, and then consider the cost in dollars,” he said once. And on Capitol Hill, Russell’s views were the views that counted. “In the field of national defense, Russell is recognized as pretty much the voice of the Senate,” journalist Jack Bell wrote accurately during the 1960s—and he could have written the same words accurately during the 1950s or the 1940s. “He is considered to be the greatest living expert on the military defense and establishment of the United States,” another congressional observer said, and as such, he was “largely responsible for shaping military budgets during the Cold War,” for keeping America militarily strong.

Another of Russell’s great causes was that of America’s farmers. Believing that “Every great civilization has derived its basic strength and wealth from the soil,” and that the primarily agricultural character of the Old South was a principal reason that its culture was so superior to that of the North, with its pounding assembly lines and soot-covered cities, he felt fervently that unless America revived the dignity of farm life, it would decline as Greece and Rome declined. Passing through an almost empty Senate Chamber one day while Hubert Humphrey was giving an ardent speech on the importance of agriculture, Russell suddenly stopped as he was almost out the door to hear what Humphrey was saying. Walking back into the room, he sat down at a desk right in front of the fiery Minnesotan and looked up at him as he talked, and then began to say, in rhythm with Humphrey’s points, “That’s right.” “Yes sir, that’s right.” “He’s absolutely right.” As a reporter wrote, “It was a little like a prayer meeting.” And seeing that the American farmer was being driven from his land by economic forces too big for him to fight alone, for thirty-eight years Richard Russell tried to bring government to the farmer’s side. He was fighting for farm price parity—the parity that he regarded as simple justice for farmers—in 1938, and again in 1948 and 1958. Decade after decade, he played a major role in providing funds for rural electrification, soil conservation, and government-insured mortgages to help farm families buy or keep their land. Year after year, behind the closed doors of conference committees, or of his subcommittee, he quietly inserted funds for agricultural research in appropriations bills. The 1937 legislation creating a Farm Security Administration to make land and equipment loans to impoverished farmers was called the Bankhead-Jones Act, but the key figure in making the FSA viable was Russell—whose name was never publicly associated with the legislation. Without his support, Bankhead was to admit years later, the measure, unpopular in the North, would not have passed in the Senate. Every year thereafter brought attempts to abolish the FSA or slash its appropriations. Year after year, in subcommittee and conference committee, Russell beat back those attempts.

Of all his battles for the farmer, Russell was proudest of his fight for a national school lunch program which would aid farmers by reducing the country’s huge agricultural surpluses while providing nourishment for needy children. As one reporter noted, “He kept [the program] alive for nine years by stubbornly putting it into the appropriations bill,” until in 1946, it was finally enacted into law. Yet the National School Lunch Act bore no senator’s name although, as Gilbert Fite notes, it “was essentially the Russell bill.” Not one of the agricultural bills for which Russell maneuvered and argued—not one of the bills which he rewrote and amended until he was in effect their author—bears his name. But so many of them bear his imprint that an admiring fellow senator could say that “throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, farmers owed their direct parity payments, soil conservation payments, and loans from the FSA more to Russell than to any other single leader in Washington.” And although

in 1962 he was to surrender his chairmanship of the agricultural subcommittee to devote the bulk of his time to the Armed Services Committee, he was never to stop fighting for the rural families he regarded as the bulwark of democracy.

THE CAUSE MOST PRECIOUS to Richard Russell, however, was the cause that was not his country's but his Southland's.

In defending that cause, Russell was outwardly very different—in appearance and in arguments—from racist senatorial demagogues like Cotton Ed Smith and Theodore (the Man) Bilbo, who ranted on the Senate floor about “niggers” and the “Negro menace” and the intellectual and moral supremacy of “the pure and undefiled Caucasian strain,” and who blocked every attempt to pass civil rights legislation with filibusters during which they read telephone books and recipes for pot likker and southern delicacies into the record for hours as if to show their utter contempt for “Northern agitators.”

A Russell of the Russells of Georgia would not stoop to what Richard Russell called “nigger-baiting”; “he considered it unworthy of people in his class,” his biographer wrote, and seldom used the word, never in public. He maintained firmly that he was not a racist. “There are no members of the Negro race in my state tonight,” he said on the Senate floor in 1938, “who would say that any official or personal act of mine had resulted in any unfairness to the Negroes.” “I was brought up with them. I love them,” he said on another occasion. And, despising a Bilbo, the short, red-faced, pot-bellied, profane son of an impoverished mill-hand, for the pot-likker filibusters that made Russell's beloved Southland appear backward and foolish, he himself based his defense of the filibuster on the Constitution's concern with protecting the rights of minorities in this case, the minority being the eleven southern states—and on the Senate's provision to protect that right: the right of unlimited debate. And while, from his early days in the Senate, he opposed—as the Bilbos and the Smiths opposed—virtually any bill designed to ameliorate the condition of black Americans, in his arguments against these bills Russell took the high ground. He invariably based his arguments on constitutional premises: that the proposed legislation would violate either the constitutionally guaranteed sovereign rights of the individual states, or, as he put it, “the rights of private property and the rights of American citizens to choose their associates,” or of American businessmen to hire and fire whom they wished.

He employed this rationale from his earliest days in the Senate. During the 1930s, lynching was the most urgent civil rights issue, and twice, in 1935 and 1938, liberal senators attempted to bring major anti-lynching bills to the floor, where, they felt, the bills would pass; the 1938 measure bore the sponsoring names of no less than seventy senators. Both times the Senate was blocked from voting by southern filibusters, in which Bilbo and Smith and Connally and Maybank pouted and postured—and in both of which Richard Russell

delivered full-dress speeches, closely reasoned, calm in tone. And it was noticeable that when Russell spoke, “more colleagues were present to listen than at most Senate sessions” because “they considered Russell something of a moderate on this issue” and therefore “had unusual interest in what he had to say.”

Standing, erect and dignified, fingertips resting on his desk, he dealt with the proposed bills on broad, philosophic grounds. The bills had grave implications, he said. They were attacks on principles—sacred principles: the Constitution was sacred; the constitutionally guaranteed sovereign rights of states were sacred; passage of the bills would shake the very bedrock of American government. And they were attacks as well, he said, on a way of life, on a whole civilization; they would, he said, “strike vital blows at the civilization of those I seek to represent.”

This civilization—the southern way of life, gracious, civilized—was eminently worth preserving, he said. And, he said, it was based on a harmonious relationship between the races. It had not been easy to achieve this harmony, he said. It had “been evolved painfully through seventy years of trial and error, suffering and sacrifice, on the part of both races.” It was based on segregation. “We believe the system of segregation . . . is necessary to preserve peace and harmony between the races.” This system, he said, benefited not just whites but blacks; it “promotes the welfare and progress of both races.” Just look, he told his fellow senators in one speech, how much the system had done for blacks: “In a short space of time the race that had only known savagery and slavery had been brought into a new day of civilization, where education and opportunity had been provided for them.” In another speech, he said, “I challenge all human history to show another instance where in the brief span of seventy-five years as much progress has been made by an uncivilized race as has been made by the southern Negro.” And he assured the Senate that not only southern whites but southern blacks agreed with this. “The whites and blacks alike in our section have learned that it is better for the races to live apart socially,” he said.

We have worked hard and painstakingly down through the years to evolve a plan of having the Negro in our midst with the least possible friction, and we have made remarkable progress in adjusting to inevitable problems and conflicts which arise when two races live side by side.

Of course problems still existed, he said, but the problems were not nearly as serious as they were portrayed. Lynchings, for example, were undeniably deplorable. No one could defend that practice; certainly he was not defending it. But, he said, in a 1938 speech, the problem of lynchings was greatly exaggerated. Lynchings, he said, had been nearly eliminated. The North, with its

outbreaks of gangland murders, was more violent than the South. Federal anti-lynching legislation was therefore not only unconstitutional but “unnecessary and uncalled for.” Furthermore, federal legislation would be “an unjust reflection on the people of the South” since it would “pillory” a “great section of this country before the world as being incapable of its own self-government.” The South was itself eliminating lynchings, he said; nonetheless northern liberals were saying to it, “You are a clan of barbarians. You cannot handle your own affairs unless we apply to you the lash and the spur of federal power.” And the proposed solutions, he said—not only the anti-lynching bills but the anti-poll tax bill and other anti-segregation legislation—would only aggravate the problem. Many of these proposals could be administered only by force: federal troops. “I’m as interested in the Negro people of my state as anyone in the Senate,” he was to say once. “I love them. But I know what’s going to happen if you apply force—there’ll be violence.” The poll tax and lynching bills were opening wedges of a program designed by northern liberals to change the political structure which had kept the two races living together in harmony; “if it were adopted in its entirety, [it] would destroy the white civilization of the South.”

And finally, he said, these bills would violate a great principle—one which he was sure no senator, thinking of his own state’s interests, would want violated. The federal government was forbidden by the Constitution from interfering in the internal affairs of any state, and if the Senate allowed such interference, no state would be safe. The poll tax might be unwise, he said—but it would be far more unwise to abolish it by federal law: “Let the poll tax be repealed, if it should be, at the proper place. We have not yet come to the state of affairs in Georgia where we need the advice of those who would occupy the position of the carpetbagger and the scalawag of the days of Reconstruction to tell us how to handle our internal affairs.”

IN THIS SPEECH, and in scores of others during his thirty-eight years in the Senate, Russell indignantly defended himself against implications of racism. Once, after listening to northern liberal senators denounce southern racism, he said in an impassioned reply: “I don’t know those people they’re talking about. I just don’t know the South they talk about. I have no greater rights because I am a white man. I’m proud of being a white man and I’ll do all I can to encourage any other race to be proud of itself.”

In scores of speeches he reiterated that he was interested in progress, and opposed only to attempts to force progress too rapidly by means of outside—federal—interference, which, he said, would only inflame passions and make the situation worse, not better. And in scores of speeches he assured the Senate that outside interference was not necessary, because the South was solving its problems itself—was, in fact, well on its way to solving them. As his biog-

rapher was to summarize: “Russell did not deliver racist diatribes. His tone was moderate, and he never said anything malicious about blacks. He aimed to educate and convince northern [senators] that the South should be left alone to handle racial problems.”

And he did convince them. At the close of Russell’s 1938 speech against lynching legislation, Borah of Idaho walked over to him and congratulated him—and then took the floor himself to echo Russell’s argument that the bill was a violation of states’ rights. (Whereupon Russell rose in his turn to say, “The people of the South will ever revere the name of William E. Borah.”) George W. Norris—even Norris—said that the southern arguments had convinced him to vote against cloture.

He convinced northern liberals that he was not a racist, that he didn’t hate the Negro, that he was a moderate who truly wanted progress in racial relations—convinced them so thoroughly that for decades descriptions of Richard Russell by the predominately liberal corps of Washington journalists were couched in terms that verged on idolatry. In a 1963 cover story—typical of twenty-five years of such descriptions—*Newsweek* informed its readers that “Richard Russell is at opposite poles from the stereotype some Northerners hold of a Deep-Dixie segregationist—the gallus-snapping, Negro-baiting semi-illiterate. Senator Russell . . . is a courtly, soft-spoken, cultured patrician, whose aides and associates treat him with deferential awe. Modest, even shy, in manner, devastatingly skilled in debate, he has a brilliant mind, encyclopedic learning. . . .”

This respect was based on the belief that, as *Newsweek*’s longtime chief congressional correspondent, Samuel Shaffer was to state flatly, “Russell was not a racist,” and that he had “an essential reasonableness in this prickly area.” “Russell’s view must be respected,” Shaffer wrote. “He did not say ‘no’ to change but tried to regulate the pace of change to prevent the disorder he believed would follow upon change forced down the throats [of the South].” Harold H. Martin wrote in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1951 that Russell’s opposition to civil rights legislation, “honest and unshakable,” was based on his conviction that such legislation, “if passed, would lead to rioting and bloodshed in the South.” Journalists clothed his opposition in a romantic view of the South. In an admiring cover story in 1957, *Time* explained that “Dick Russell’s roots lie deeply and inextricably in the long-lost dream of the Old South. He was brought up . . . amid a smoky Georgia haze of swollen, mud-yellow streams and blowing red dust, of pine-cone fires and fireflies and summer thunder, of white new-blown cotton and wild peach blossoms and slow mules dragging their lazy load.” And Russell epitomized the best of that heritage, *Time* said. “Dick . . . admired and respected [Negroes] in that special, paternal Southern way.”

The Washington press corps and northern liberals paid Russell, in fact, what for them was their ultimate compliment: they assured their readers that,

no matter what Dick Russell was forced to say for the record, his heart was in the right place. As Martin put it in that 1951 article: "Civil righters who like Russell personally and who note that he bears no resemblance in speech or manner to the classic Northern concept of the Southern demagogue are inclined to think that he is far more liberal in his heart than he is in his votes." And Martin added, "Russell, indeed, feels none of the demagogue's hatred toward the Negro, and he despises the Ku Klux Klan mentality which looks upon the Negro as something less than a human being. . . ."

His opposition to proposals to allow black Americans to vote, and to protect them from lynch mobs—his opposition, in fact, to any and all civil rights proposals—was, these journalists said, opposition he was forced to make for political reasons, because otherwise he could not be re-elected. His speeches, they said, were speeches made only for the consumption of his constituents. Dick Russell, they said over and over, year after year—as year after year, decade after decade, Dick Russell fought civil rights bills—Dick Russell didn't really mean the arguments he was making.

He was such a decent man, they said—he *couldn't* mean them.

BUT OF COURSE the high ground is generally the best ground from which to fight—and never more so than in twentieth-century senatorial battles for the Lost Cause. The South, with its twenty-two votes, was as outnumbered in the Senate as it had been in the Civil War. It needed allies to win. And potential allies—non-southern senators sympathetic to the southern position or at least willing to support it in return for southern support for pet causes of their own—didn't want to be labeled as racists. If they were to be bound to the Cause, its racial aspects had to be toned down, so that votes against the poll tax or anti-lynching laws could be cloaked in loftier—constitutional—principles, in philosophy rather than prejudice. Richard Russell's rationalizations made it easier for non-southern senators seeking rationalizations to vote with the South; his approach, so different from that of the Senate's racist demagogues, was vastly more effective in defending the cause that was so precious to him. And the more perceptive of the southern senators realized this. As Sam Ervin was to put it: "Dick Russell always carried on his combat in such a knightly fashion that he never aroused the antagonism of the people most determined to overcome his efforts. He had an uncanny capacity to do that. . . . Most southerners possess that capacity more or less to a limited degree, but Dick Russell possessed it to an unsurpassed degree."

And the South was not only fireflies and peach blossoms and white new-blown cotton, not only gentility and graciousness, not only a sturdy Jeffersonian yeomanry, not only the gallantry of Longstreet and Pickett and of staunch Stonewall on the ridge, not only a place of—in the words Richard Russell spoke on the Senate floor—"peace and harmony between the races." As

Richard Russell could hardly have avoided knowing, since at least two incidents that somewhat disproved those words occurred not just in Georgia, and not just in Barrow County, but right down the road from his home.

In 1908, when Dick was an eleven-year-old boy in Winder, a young Negro was arrested in Winder and charged with assaulting a "respected white woman." A judge in nearby Gwinnett acquitted him after a witness testified that the accused had actually been at another location at the time of the alleged crime. Upon his return to Winder, however, the black youth's train was met at the station by what the *Winder News* called "a reception committee of unknown parties." Taken to "a secluded spot," he was given 175 lashes with a buggy whip to "persuade" him to leave town. ("During the persuasion," the newspaper said, the youth "admitted" his guilt.) No one was prosecuted for the crime. In 1922, when Dick was already in the State Legislature, a black resident of Winder, Jesse Long Reed, was charged with the attempted murder of a twenty-three-year-old white woman ("He . . . left the black bruises of his hands on her white neck," the *Winder News* reported). Arrested as he was eating in a local restaurant, Reed was taken to jail, where "people from all directions began gathering" and "there was talk of lynching." A county judge ordered the sheriff to "get the negro out of Winder." As he was driving his prisoner to Atlanta, however, the sheriff "found the road completely blocked with five or six automobiles" about three miles outside town. "About 25" masked men armed with pistols dragged Reed from the car, hung him from a pine tree and riddled his body with bullets. "For hours people gathered to view the negro as he hung by the neck," with some families building fires, spreading blankets, and eating picnic dinners. The sheriff said he could not identify any of the lynchers because they wore masks, and no one was ever prosecuted for the crime.

Russell had arrived in the Legislature to find the Governor, Hugh M. Dorsey, and a group of legislators attempting to pass anti-lynching legislation—since during the past four years alone there had been fifty-eight lynchings in Georgia. Russell did not participate in this attempt. During his ten years in the Legislature—the last five as Speaker of the House—there were other lynchings in Georgia. There is no record of Russell's views on the subject. There is only the fact that in the House that he headed, no anti-lynching legislation was passed. He "avoided," in his biographer's careful term, "inflammatory and emotional issues such as lynching. . . ."

When Russell was elected Governor, he became chief executive of a state whose criminal justice system was considered something special even for the South, in the harshness with which its courts and prisons treated those who came within its purview, the overwhelming majority of whom were black. "Georgia exceeds in size and wealth most of the nearby states, but its prison system must be placed at the bottom of the list," the National Society of Penal Institutions declared. Russell was very proud of that rigor, and of the role he played in maintaining it—so proud, in fact, that when, in 1969, a reporter inter-

viewing him about his pre-Senate career neglected to raise the subject, Russell raised it himself.

"I suppose I was the harshest Governor on criminals" in the history of Georgia, he said. "All the statistics the last time I saw [them] showed I pardoned and paroled fewer people than any Governor they ever had." Even as harsh a governor as his successor Eugene Talmadge (known as "Whippin' Gene" because he said that while he had never actually been a member of the Ku Klux Klan, "I used to do a little whippin' myself) had, Russell said, pardoned three times as many criminals as he had. Georgia's criminal justice system as a whole, Russell said, was exceptional in the fairness with which it dispensed justice. Pointing out that he had been a criminal lawyer in his early career, he said, "I had never seen a man I knew was innocent, convicted."

The incident during his governorship that brought him, for a brief time, into the national spotlight revolved around the harshest aspect of that system. In 1932, America was stunned by the publication of *I Am a Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang*.^{*} Its author, Robert E. Burns, a young white New York accountant, successful before the First World War, had emerged from the war shell-shocked and unable to hold a job, wandered south to Georgia where, "so hungry I was seeing things," he was partly persuaded and partly intimidated by two men into joining them in robbing a grocery store of four dollars and eighty cents. Arrested in 1922, he was sentenced to six to ten years in the Georgia chain gangs, where men wore a heavy iron shackle on each ankle and were manacled together at work all day, and in their bunks at night—those of them lucky enough to be in bunks and not in the notorious "cage wagons." Burns saw men tortured in medieval stocks, beaten with heavy leather straps, and worked to death until, within a year, he escaped.

During the next several years, he became a reporter and then the editor of *Chicago* magazine, before Georgia detectives showed up in his office in 1929. Georgia prison officials promised him a release or a parole within ninety days if he returned voluntarily. As soon as he returned, however, the promise was broken; he was remanded to the same chain gang to complete his full sentence. Escaping within a year again and making his way to New Jersey, he wrote his book, which received respectful reviews. The "real importance" of this "breath-taking and heart-wrenching book . . . lies in the baring of Georgia's incredible penal system . . . which manages to defeat essential justice and outrage humanity," said the *New York Times*. "The conditions he describes there, the filth, the starvation rations, the inhuman shackles and chains, the body-breaking labor, the vicious cruelty, would be almost unbelievable if it were not that . . . investigators . . . substantiate what he says." And the *New York Herald Tribune* said, "One would like to hear the answer of Georgia authorities to this burning book."

^{*}That same year, the book was made into a movie, with the same title, that became one of the most famous of its time.

The answer came from Georgia's Governor. Demanding that Burns be extradited to serve the remaining years of his full term, he dispatched a team of state prosecutors, armed with somewhat unconvincing affidavits from convicts defending conditions in the chain gangs, to bring him back. When New Jersey's Governor, Arthur H. Moore, refused to allow him to be extradited, the Georgia Governor reacted to the refusal with rage. The New Jersey decision, he said, was "a slander on the State of Georgia and its institutions." And, he said, it was unconstitutional, a violation of the rights of a "sovereign state." "The Governor of New Jersey, nor anyone else has any right to wantonly and deliberately insult the state of Georgia and her people by declining to honor an extradition for a convict on the ground that our State is uncivilized and backward, inhumane to prisoners and barbarous in their punishments." As for "charges that our penal system is barbarous and inhumane," the Georgia Governor said, they must "be denounced for what they are: absolutely false and unfounded. . . . Prisoners are well fed and treated humanely, but are not coddled nor maintained in luxury."

The Governor, of course, was Richard Russell, and the response of northern newspapers to Russell's statements was summarized by one editorial which said, "The State of New Jersey . . . is telling the world that something is rotten in the State of Georgia," but "The State of Georgia, far from bowing its head in guilty shame, is taking the offensive and lashing out at New Jersey and its Governor with both fists. We can see how Georgia feels about it all in the statements of its Governor. . . ." But when, a decade later, articles about now-Senator Russell began appearing in national magazines, they contained no reference to his defense of a system that defeated essential justice and outraged humanity. The flattering cover stories in *Time* and *Newsweek*, the long profiles in the *Saturday Evening Post*, that celebrated the progressive reforms of Russell's governorship, never even mentioned the Georgia Chain Gang incident; in fact, if there was a single mention of the incident in even one of the scores of profiles of Russell that appeared in newspapers and magazines during the 1940s and '50s and '60s, the author has been unable to find it.

Nor did any of the articles mention that the southerner who said that anti-lynching legislation was "unnecessary and uncalled for," who said that the South was a place of "peace and harmony between the races," had had, very close to his home, at least two lynchings for which no one was ever convicted or even prosecuted. None mentioned that the southerner who asserted so passionately that the South could take care of the lynching problem itself had done nothing to take care of it as Speaker or Governor. None mentioned that he had, in at least one respect, been the harshest Governor in the history of a very harsh state—none mentioned any of the aspects of his career that might have hinted at the existence of feelings other than the "love" for black Americans of which he talked, and the "fairness" and "moderation" for which he was so widely praised.

AND IF RICHARD RUSSELL'S SENTIMENTS were kept on a lofty plane so long as he, and the South he loved, were winning, and winning easily, when winning became more difficult there did indeed begin to surface hints of feelings that might have surprised those who were sure that Richard Russell was "not a racist," that he had "an essential reasonableness" about race, that he was not trying to prevent change but merely to "regulate" its pace, that "he is far more liberal in his heart than he is in his votes," that he "admired and respected [Negroes] in that special, paternal Southern way."

Winning became harder because of the Second World War. Turning back civil rights measures in the Senate had been easy in 1935 and 1938, but the great buildup for the oncoming war brought huge defense plants to the South (ironically, to Georgia more than any other state, thanks to the influence of Russell and his House counterpart, Carl Vinson, on congressional Armed Services Committees; more than twenty-five thousand workers would be employed on the assembly lines at the great bomber plant at Marietta alone), and in 1941 President Roosevelt established by executive order a Fair Employment Practices Commission and empowered it to move legally against defense and war contractors who discriminated on the basis of race, color, or religion.

As a result of this order, and of the fact that there were not enough white workers to fill the jobs, northern blacks, unaccustomed to, and resistant to, the rigidities of southern segregation, flooded into the South. The haste with which the plants had to be geared up and manned made it unfeasible to build separate facilities, so that suddenly, in the very heart of the Southland, whites and blacks were eating together, using the same bathrooms and drinking fountains, sharing the same hospital wards. And there were also the huge new military training camps in the South, in which black men and white men were sleeping together in the same barracks.

Distressed by the fact that, by creating the FEPC through executive order, Roosevelt had bypassed the Senate, where the creation of the new agency could have been blocked, Russell saw it as an agency actively working to end segregation and thereby end the southern way of life. And then, in 1942, the House of Representatives passed a bill to eliminate poll taxes. Declaring that such efforts to use the war "to force social equality and the commingling of races in the South . . . are doomed to failure," Russell blocked the House bill from coming to the floor of the Senate—but he was aware that the vote on cloture, generally so lopsidedly pro-southern in the past, had been much closer this time. And in 1944 there was another anti-poll tax bill, and further attempts to expand the funding and jurisdiction of the FEPC. "I am afraid we are going to get licked," Russell wrote a friend, and although he wasn't, the vote by which he defeated cloture this time was uncomfortably close; forces generated by the war were threatening the South he loved.

At first, the veil under which Russell's feelings had been cloaked fell away only in private. There had always been scattered hints in private; years before,

while he was professing on the Senate floor that "I have no greater rights because I am a white man," he had written in a letter marked "confidential": "Any southern white man worth a pinch of salt would give his all to maintain white supremacy." Now the tone in his letters sharpened when he wrote about whites and blacks using the same hospitals on Army bases. "It is a terrible mistake and I hope we will be able to convince the Army of it before it is widely advertised and becomes a serious issue," he wrote in 1942. The races were even sharing the same maternity wards! "A deplorable situation," he said. And there might be even worse situations. When, in 1942, a Savannah woman, indignant over the presence of black soldiers in nearby Army camps, wrote him that "It is not necessary to point out to you, a Southern gentleman, the tragic possibilities which this situation holds," possibilities which she said "will be inevitable," Russell replied that it was indeed not necessary. "I am fully aware of the very dangerous implications attending the concentration of negro troops from northern states in the South," he said. "I feel about this matter just as any other Southern white man does, and certainly hope that we can avoid trouble."

The whole question of blacks in the armed forces was troubling to Russell. Blacks had a limited usefulness in the military anyway, Russell felt; didn't people realize that black soldiers were not as physically courageous as whites?—"In the last war in France . . . the use of colored troops for heavy fighting was not very successful." For that matter, he was to say, they were not even as courageous as soldiers of some other non-white races. After the war, complimenting the Japanese-American Nisei units that had served with the American army for not "fading away in the face of enemy action," he said, "It is a great pity that other minority groups do not emulate their example instead of fading in the face of enemy action." Of course, he said, blacks should not be inducted into elite units like the Marine Corps, in which courage was especially essential. Not that blacks were not violent—"These people," his sister Patience heard him say, "when they get mad, they kill. And they will kill without being provoked, to a great extent"—it was just that they were not brave. As one study of his racial views puts it: "In spite of an enviable battle record of some blacks in World War I, Russell refused to accept the idea that blacks were not inherent cowards." And the commingling of black and white troops created other problems; it was not a matter of racial prejudice at all, he was to explain—at issue, rather, was the "health and morals of hundreds of thousands of American boys." "There is no more intimate human relationship known to men than that of enlisted men serving together at the squad level," he said. "They eat and sleep together. They use the same sanitary facilities." And, he said, "the incidence of syphilis, gonorrhea, chancre and all other venereal diseases is appallingly higher among the members of the Negro race." Not only is this difference true in civilian life, he said, but "it is likewise great between the units in the Army as compared with the white units, though both races have available identical systems of instruction and of hygiene to prevent venereal

diseases." Having whites and blacks serve in the same units "is sure to increase the numbers of men who will be disabled through communicable diseases." Special camps should be created for blacks "who do not meet the health requirements" to cure them of VD before they are allowed to join the rest of the Army.

And it wasn't merely *killing* by blacks that Russell feared—as becomes apparent from a draft of a speech that he would later dictate to a secretary. In the draft he referred to newspaper stories from Portland, Oregon, about a fifteen-year-old white girl, the daughter of a Portland businessman, who had gone to a dance with a thirty-year-old black man, and was then abducted by him, held captive for ten days, and raped repeatedly by him and four other men.

"All of the men charged with the attack were past thirty years of age, and most of them were past forty," Russell dictated. "All of them were Negroes." He regretted, he said, that the *Congressional Record* did not print pictures. It was a shame that "the pictures of the defendants appearing at the head of the article cannot be printed in the *Record*." Moreover, he said, there have been "other cases of a similar type . . . outside the South," but they "are too sickening for the *Record*." And, he said in the draft, it is "the system of social intermingling of the races that gives rise to these cases."

This speech, however, was only dictated, never delivered; his opinion that "these people, when they get mad, they kill" was an opinion expressed only to friends and family. Russell almost never forgot the overriding strategic consideration: that, if the South was to win, it needed allies, and opposition to desegregation must therefore be made as respectable as possible in the North, respectable to Republican senators.

Nevertheless, the threat to the southern way of life grew steadily more serious during the war. Russell foresaw that blacks who had worked in defense plants and served in the armed forces were not going to return without protest to their prewar second-class citizenship. He saw all too clearly what was coming. Let the dikes be breached once, and the torrent would begin. "There is no such thing as a little integration," he was to say. "They are determined to get into the white schools and into the white restaurants and into the swimming pools."

He salvaged a 1944 Senate battle, the battle in which he was "afraid that we are going to be licked," but only by a brilliant appeal to Republicans whose votes had earlier that year defeated his amendment to halve the FEPC appropriation. Pointing out—"scathingly," Allen Drury wrote—"that for a party which condemned bureaucracy they were certainly inconsistent in wanting to leave the FEPC unchecked," he "successfully embarrassed enough Republicans into changing their votes" so that on a second vote his amendment carried. And during this fight he wrote a friend that the growing strength of northern efforts to force schools, swimming pools and other public places to accept both races was bringing "our southern civilization" to the verge of collapse. "I am

sick about it," he wrote. He jotted on an office notepad that if the North had its way, even "baseball [and] football teams would have to play negroes." And, it was at this time, too, that a new word began to creep into his private correspondence: "miscegenation."

It was also at this time that he began to see a new, red tinge in the black menace. A letter he wrote in 1944 claimed not only that the FEPC was administered "almost entirely by negroes"—but by Negroes with ties to the Communist Party. FEPC Chairman Malcolm Ross, he said, was "a wild-eyed radical lionized by the *Daily Worker*." "The agitation to repeal the poll-tax laws was started by the *Daily Worker*," he was to say.

Never forgetting that in the Civil War, the South had won battle after battle, only to be worn down at last by superior numbers, he feared that the pattern was being repeated in the Senate. He was able, year after year, to slash FEPC appropriations; he was never able to legislate the agency out of existence entirely. The margins of his victories were growing steadily narrower. And Richard Russell's public statements as well as private letters were beginning occasionally to show less of the "moderation" and "restraint" that had always characterized them in the past, as if the veneer were cracking, just a little but enough to reveal what lay beneath. It was on the Senate floor now that Russell charged that an FEPC ruling against racial discrimination in hiring by the Philadelphia transit system—a ruling which touched off a strike by Philadelphia transit workers—was actually a Communist plot against the South; the strike, he said, had been deliberately instigated by the FEPC so that the Army could be called in to break the strike, thereby giving an "object lesson" to discourage others (meaning southerners) from resisting FEPC rulings. In 1948, racial tensions were rising sharply in the South. Demagogues running on "white supremacy" platforms had won postwar primaries in several states. Herman Talmadge, Eugene's son, had won Georgia's governorship after promising that "no Negro will vote in Georgia for the next four years." Crosses were burning again on southern hills: Ku Klux Klan activity in general was increasing, as were the beatings and whippings of black men. President Truman demanded passage of legislation to make the FEPC permanent. And in 1948, with the threat more serious than ever, Russell's rhetoric on the Senate floor sharpened.

Needing to make opposition to the FEPC bill respectable to win non-southern support, he argued, as always, that the bill was not necessary—the charges that Negroes in the South were discriminated against in employment were greatly exaggerated, he said; "this bill does not address itself to any condition which exists today in the United States of America"—and that there was no racial motive behind the South's opposition to it.

The cry of discrimination, he said, is a "cry of 'wolf, wolf.' . . . There has never been a greater fraud perpetrated upon the American people than the deliberate attempt that has been made to create the impression that we are opposing economic equality in fighting this bill." Discrimination, he said,

worked against the best interests of the South—and the South was well aware of that. “It is said that southern Democrats are opposing [the bill] because they want to grind down and hold in subjection the Negroes.” Actually, “there is not a southern Democrat who does not know that the welfare of his people and the progress of his state are inseparably intertwined with the welfare and progress of the Negro population.” All the South wanted was the continuation of the system whose efficacy had already been proven: the separation of the races. “I am in favor of giving both the whites and the blacks equal rights, but not together. We are merely fighting to sustain in our country a way of life which both the white and the black man approve as being essential to harmony in racial relations in the South.” And it was precisely this that the bill was really intended to destroy, he said. “Those who drew the bill, those who gave it life, and those who gave the distortedness to the American people know that the main purpose back of this measure is to make it a force bill, to break down the segregation of the races which we have found essential. . . .”

He also used the other argument most effective in appealing to conservative Republicans: that the FEPC was a Communist plot, “the entering wedge to complete state socialism and communism.” “There was a great build-up for the bill over the radio and through the columns of the press,” he said. “Every left-wing group in this country had each of its cells carefully instructed as to how to spread the propaganda in support of the measure. If the desire is to nationalize industry, here is the chance. . . .”

But amid these familiar arguments, there were hints of other feelings—even if a hint might be only a single hyphenated adjective. “Mr. President,” Richard Russell said, “I do not mean to say there has been no imposition on any Negro in my section of the country, because I know there has been. There have also been semi-civilized Negroes who outraged the sense of decency of all white and colored peoples in their community by committing outrageous crimes.” He even raised publicly subjects he knew were better avoided, such as intermarriage between the races. “That, Mr. President, would mean a mongrel race,” which, he said, “would result in destroying America, because there has never been a mongrel race that has been able to stand.” And there would be other hints that emerged as if despite himself. Once he had assured the Senate of his belief that “I have no greater rights because I am a white man.” Now he told it: “Any white man who wants to take the position that he is no better than the Negro is entitled to his own opinion of himself. I do not think much of him, but he can think it.”

ON JULY 25, 1946, on a lonely dirt road near Monroe, Georgia, in Walton County, about eleven miles from Richard Russell's home, two young black couples, both recently married, were being driven home by a white farmer who had just posted six hundred dollars' bail for one of the black men, twenty-

seven-year-old Roger Malcolm, who had been accused of stabbing his white employer in the arm during a fight. As the farmer drove onto a little wooden bridge, he saw a car blocking its far end, and as soon as he stopped, another car drove up behind him, its bumper nudging his, trapping him on the bridge. Other cars drove up, and about twenty white men got out, carrying rifles and shotguns. They had not bothered to wear masks. They took Malcolm and his friend, a twenty-six-year-old war veteran who had served in Africa and the Pacific—his discharge button had, by chance, arrived at his mother's home that same week—out of the car, tied their hands behind them and marched them away. They were apparently going to leave the women unharmed, but one of the women, crying, called out to one of the attackers by name, so that he became afraid she would identify him, and they were pulled out of the car and led off, too. Then the four blacks were lined up in a row, each wife beside her husband. Three times the white leader counted, “One, two, three,” and there were three volleys; the bodies, riddled with more than sixty bullets, were scarcely recognizable.

The incident might have embarrassed another man who for years had been assuring the Senate that in the South blacks and whites lived in “peace and harmony,” and that anti-lynching and voter-protection legislation was unnecessary—as he might also have been embarrassed by the announcement a few days later from the head of the Georgia State Police that “we can't cope with the situation” because neither the farmer nor any of “the best people in town” would “talk about this” (and by the subsequent finding by a coroner's jury that the blacks had met their deaths at the hands of “persons unknown”). It didn't embarrass Richard Russell. When California Senator William Knowland inserted an article describing the lynching in the *Congressional Record*, Russell rose in indignation. “Mr. President,” he said, standing at his desk, as dignified, reasonable and sincere as ever, “no member of the Senate deplors for a moment more than I do the murders which are said to have been recently committed in my state. . . . I know the people of Walton County. . . . The people of that county are law abiding and upright, and would be as much opposed to any murder as would the people of any other county in this country. There are no better people than the people of Walton County. I have no doubt that the State authorities of Georgia will prosecute to the full extent of their powers any person who may be charged with the commission of that crime.” There was, he said, no excuse for a senator to insert in the *Record* a newspaper article insulting to the State of Georgia. “Crimes of this nature are not confined to the State of Georgia,” he said. “I doubt not that if I were to peruse the newspapers of California I would find that there have been brutal crimes committed by people of that State.”

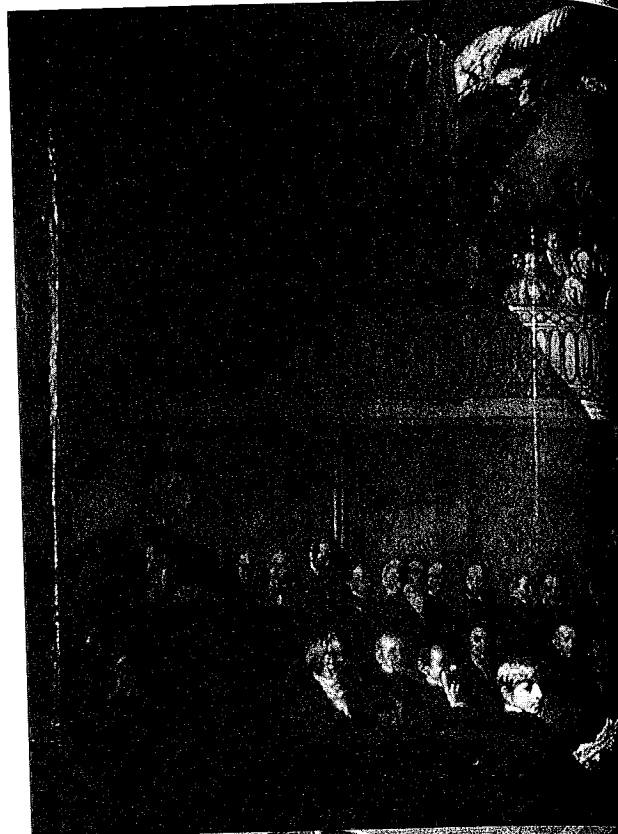
On July 30, 1946, a black farmhand was flogged to death by six white men near Lexington, Mississippi; on August 3, in Gordon, Georgia, a black mine worker was shot to death; on August 7, a black veteran was hung near Minden,

Louisiana. And also in 1946, a young black sergeant, discharged from the Army just three hours before at a demobilization center in Atlanta, boarded a bus for South Carolina. When the driver refused to let him use the lavatory, the sergeant argued with him, and at the next town, Batesburg, South Carolina, the driver called the police. Two policemen dragged the young veteran, still in uniform, from the bus, took him to jail and ground out both his eyes with a blackjack. That year, not only in Georgia but in other southern states, there were also uncounted beatings—with fists and baseball bats and bullwhips; not fatal, they were not classified as lynchings—of black veterans who, in the words of one Alabaman, “must not expect or demand any change in their status from that which existed before they went overseas.” As one act of violence after another went unpunished, the demand for federal legislation intensified. In 1946, President Truman appointed, by executive order, a blue-ribbon committee to study the civil rights problem in all its aspects, and the committee’s report, “To Secure These Rights,” called not only for a permanent FEPC, abolition of the poll tax, and federal laws against lynchings but also for the establishment of a permanent Commission on Civil Rights in the Executive Office of the President, and for an end to segregation in education, in housing, in health services—for an end to racial discrimination in the broadest terms. Firmly endorsing the recommendations for these “new concepts of civil rights,” Truman told reporters afterwards, “I mean every word of it—and I am going to prove that I do mean it.”

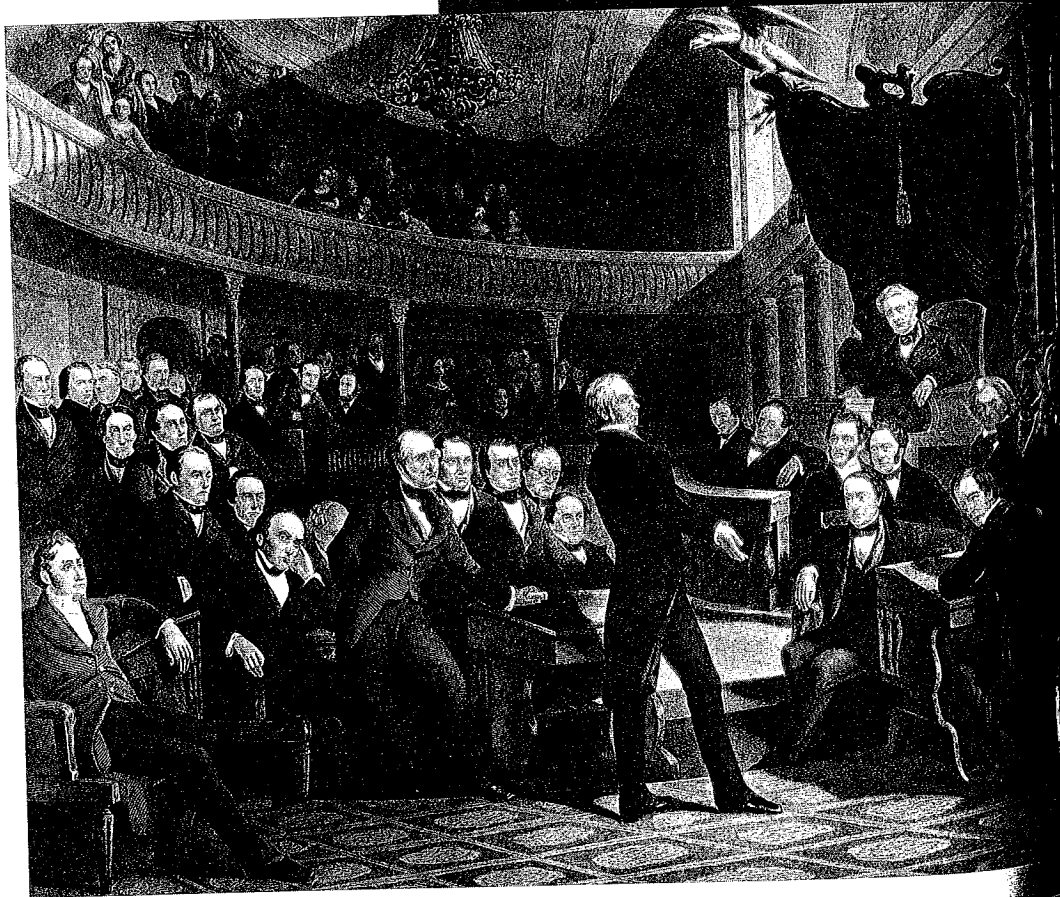
Never—never, at least, since Appomattox—had the threat been more ominous. Lee studying maps in his tent and watching, night after night, the arrows that signified the huge, well-equipped northern armies closing in on Atlanta, had seen doom no more clearly than Russell saw it now—now that a President of his own party had decided to join the “South haters.” He was convinced that the motive behind Truman’s decision, and the northern agitation in general, was strictly political: a coldly calculated political decision “to alienate Southern Democrats in exchange for the black vote” in the politically crucial big cities of the North. But that was a strong motive. Moreover, he knew that the President was not the only politician counting black votes: senators of the other party, and some of the once-staunch midwesterners of his own party, were counting them, too.

Russell’s anger against those who, for such sordid reasons, were determined to “harass” and “hellhack” his beloved Southland, to make its people “a special object of obloquy,” boiled over in private. In a letter to a Florida man, he pointed out that there were forty-three counties in Georgia in which blacks outnumbered whites. White people in these counties, he said, “cannot be expected to turn their children . . . over to schools that are run by negroes, or to live in counties that have negro sheriffs, county school superintendents or other officials.” Occasionally it boiled over in public. Calling Truman’s bill a “Gestapo” approach—“the most outrageous affront to the people of our section that we have had to face since Reconstruction Days”—he predicted that even-

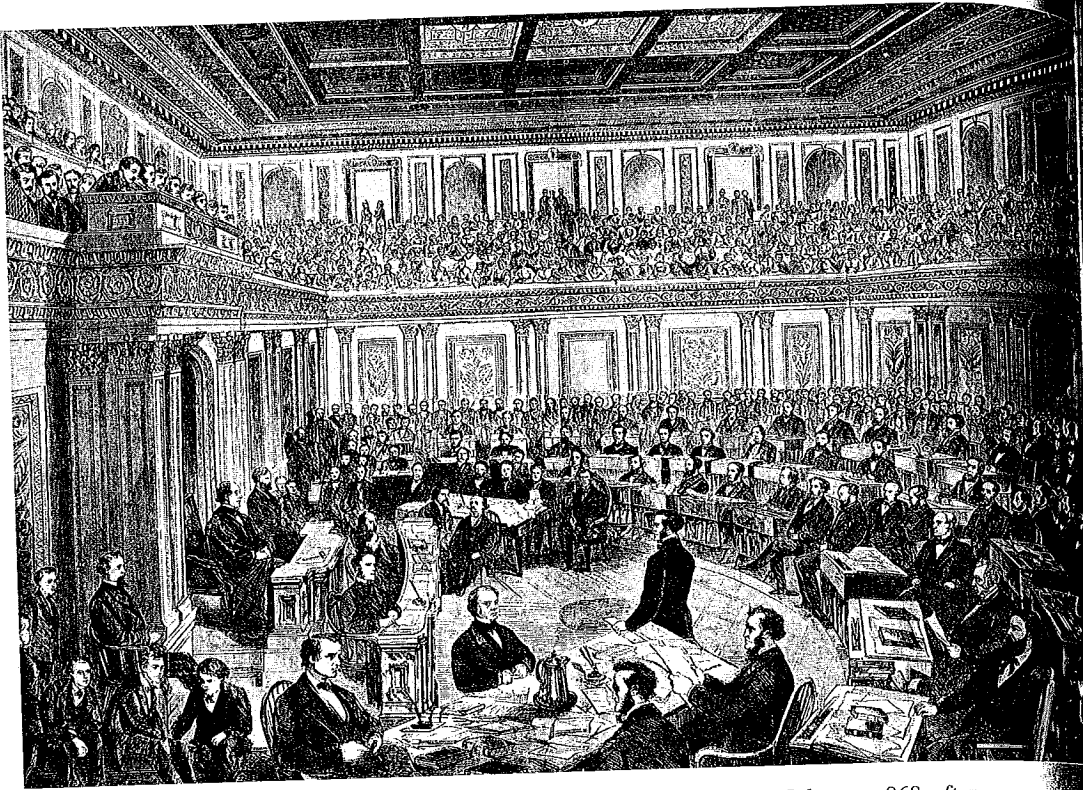




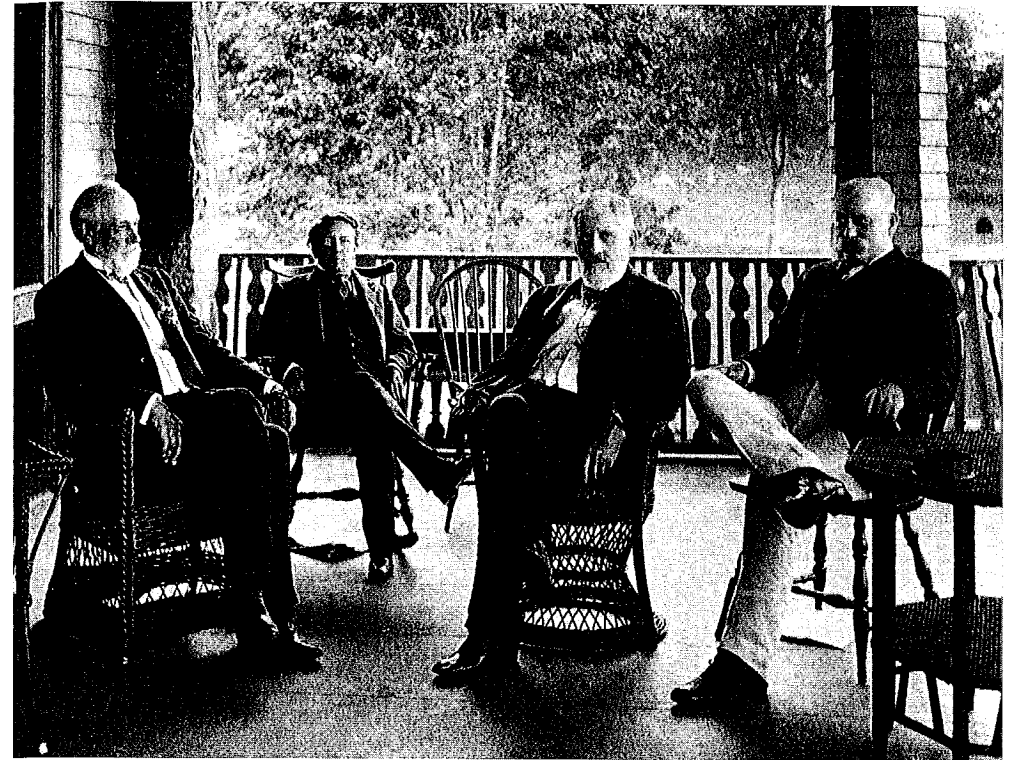
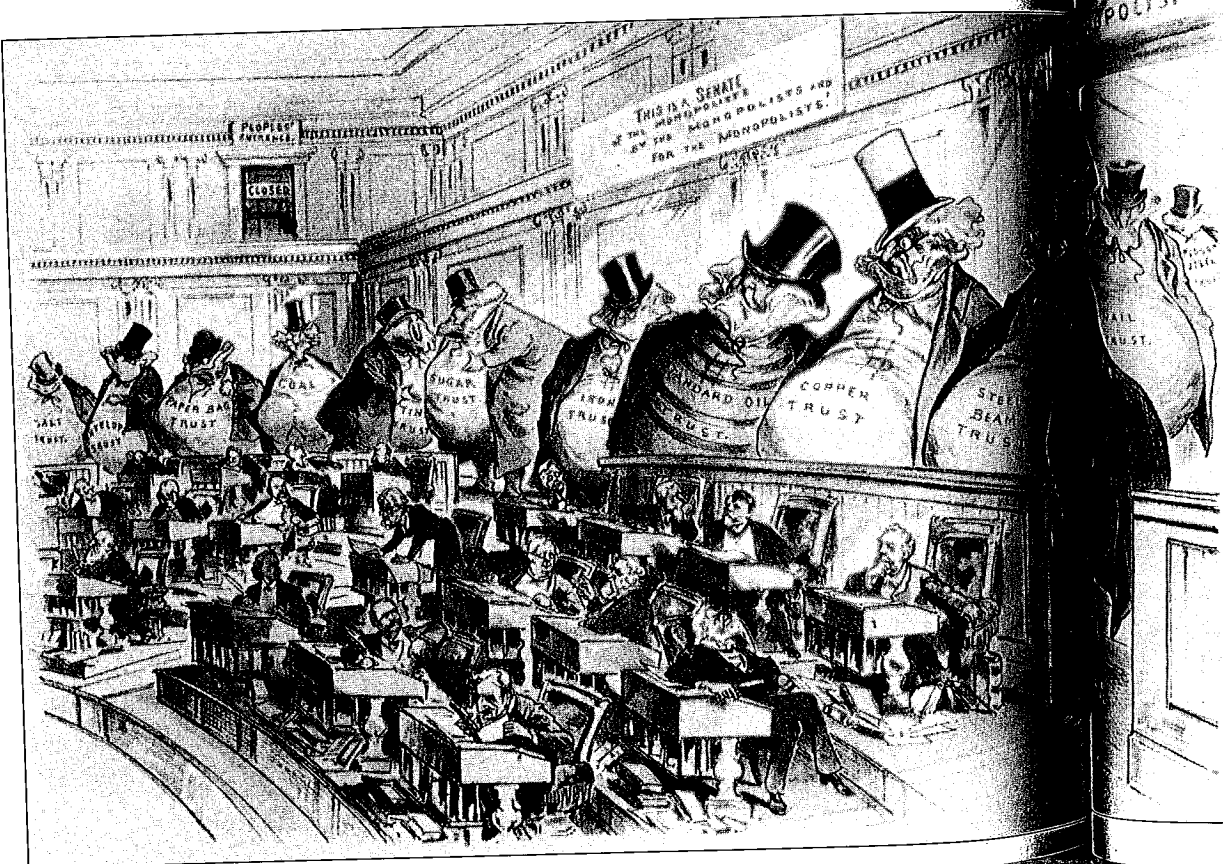
Above: *Webster Replying to Hayne*, by George P. A. Healy. Vice President John C. Calhoun, at far left, presides in the old Senate Chamber, January, 1830.



Opposite: *The United States Senate, A.D. 1850*, engraved by Robert Whitechurch after a painting by Peter Rothermel. Henry Clay presents his compromise to the Senate, presided over by Vice President Millard Fillmore. Calhoun is to the right of Fillmore, and Daniel Webster is seated at left, head in hand.



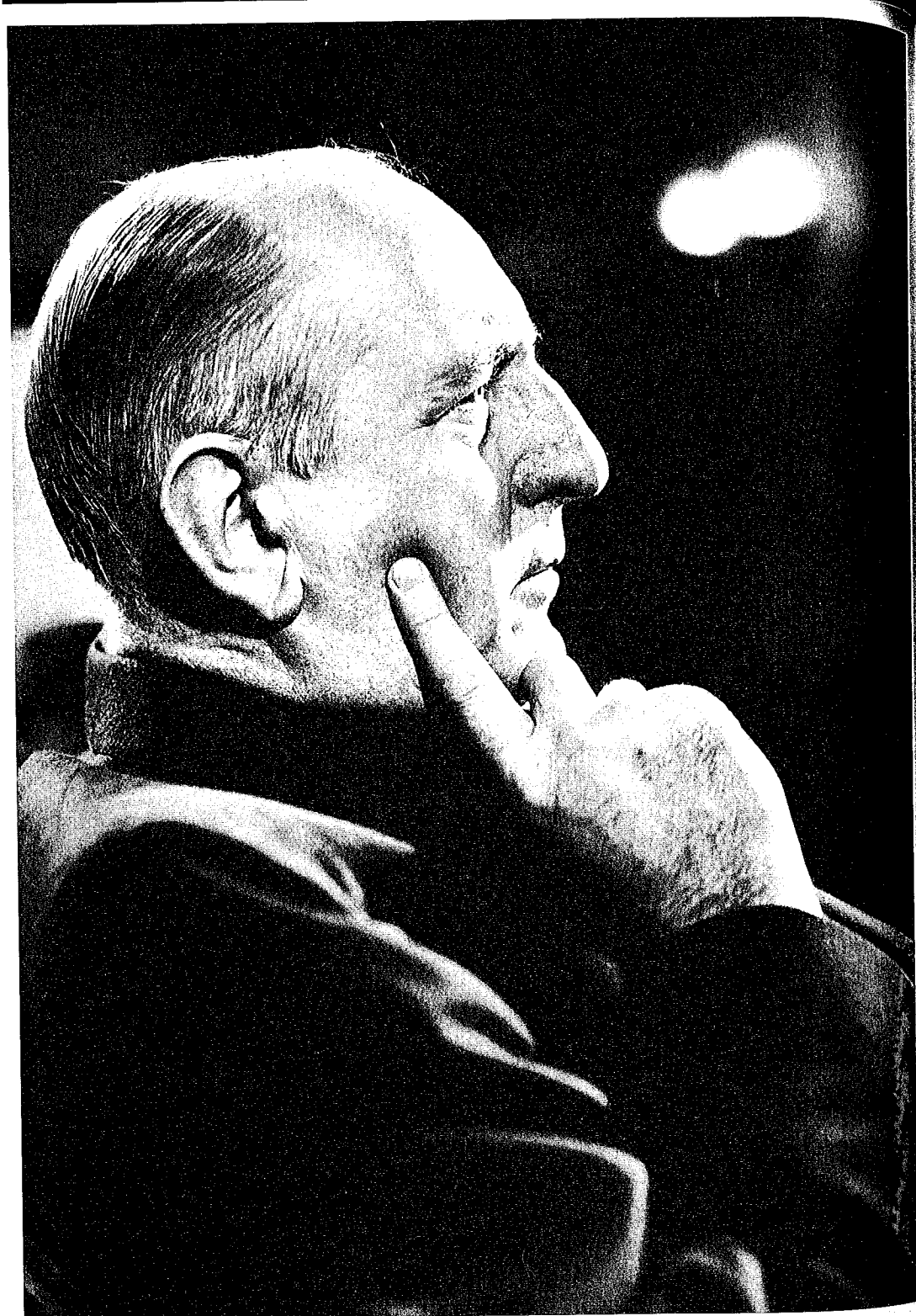
Above: Senate as a Court of Impeachment for the Trial of Andrew Johnson, 1868, after Theodore Davis. Below: Keppler's *The Bosses of the Senate*, Puck magazine, 1889



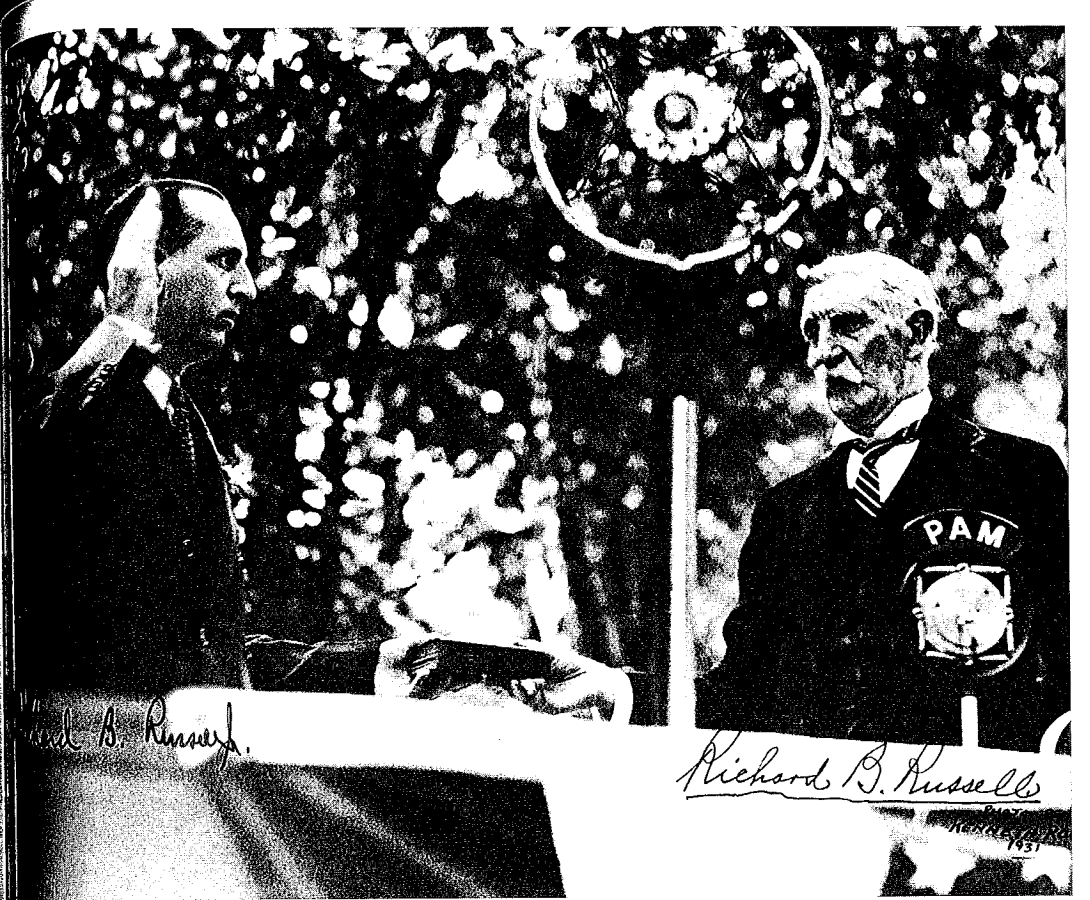
The Senate Four: left to right, Orville H. Platt, John C. Spooner, William B. Allison, and Nelson W. Aldrich, at Aldrich's Newport, Rhode Island, estate, 1903



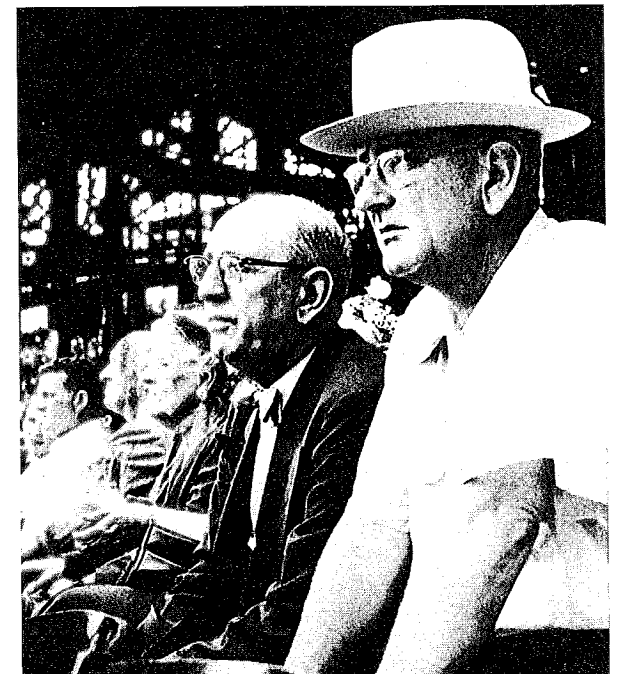
Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, right, talks to newsmen during Senate debate over the Treaty of Versailles, 1919.



A Russell of the Russells of Georgia



Richard Brevard Russell Jr. being sworn in as Governor of Georgia by the Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, Richard Brevard Russell Sr., June 27, 1931



Russell and Johnson at a Washington Senators baseball game in 1955



The Orator of the Dawn: Hubert Humphrey, the fiery mayor of Minneapolis, fighting for a strong civil rights plank at the 1948 Democratic National Convention

Congresswoman Gahagan Douglas emerging from the voting booth

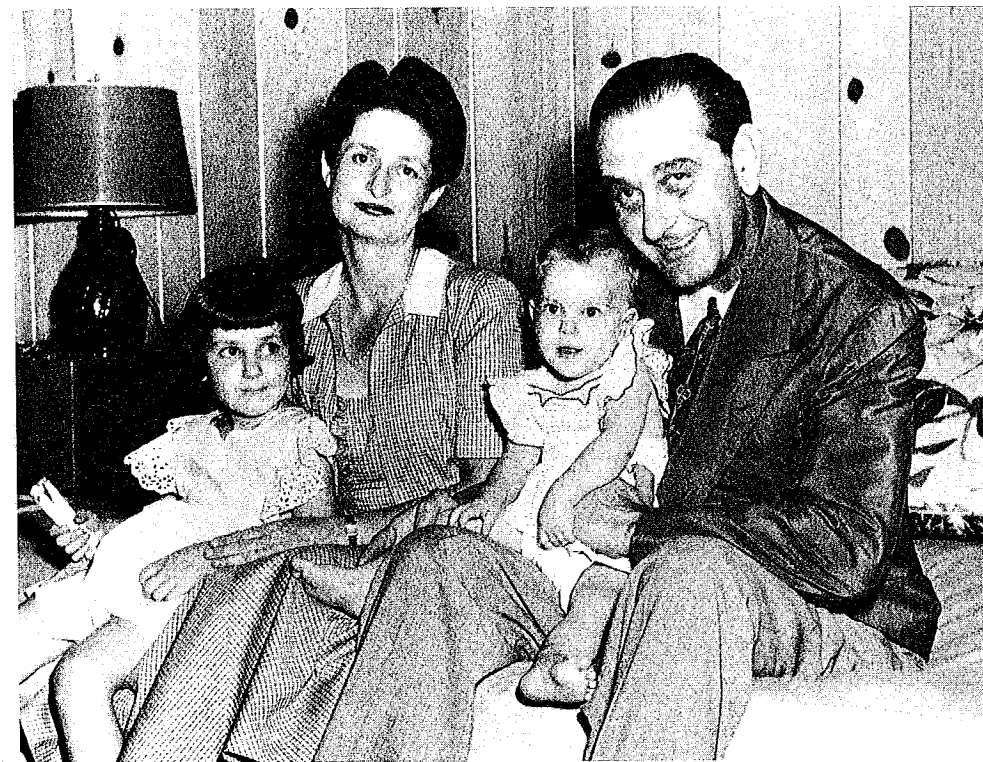


Below: The Texas delegation in Washington to attend Lyndon Johnson's January, 1949, inauguration ceremony. At Johnson's right are Justice Tom Clark and the senior Senator from Texas, Tom Connally.

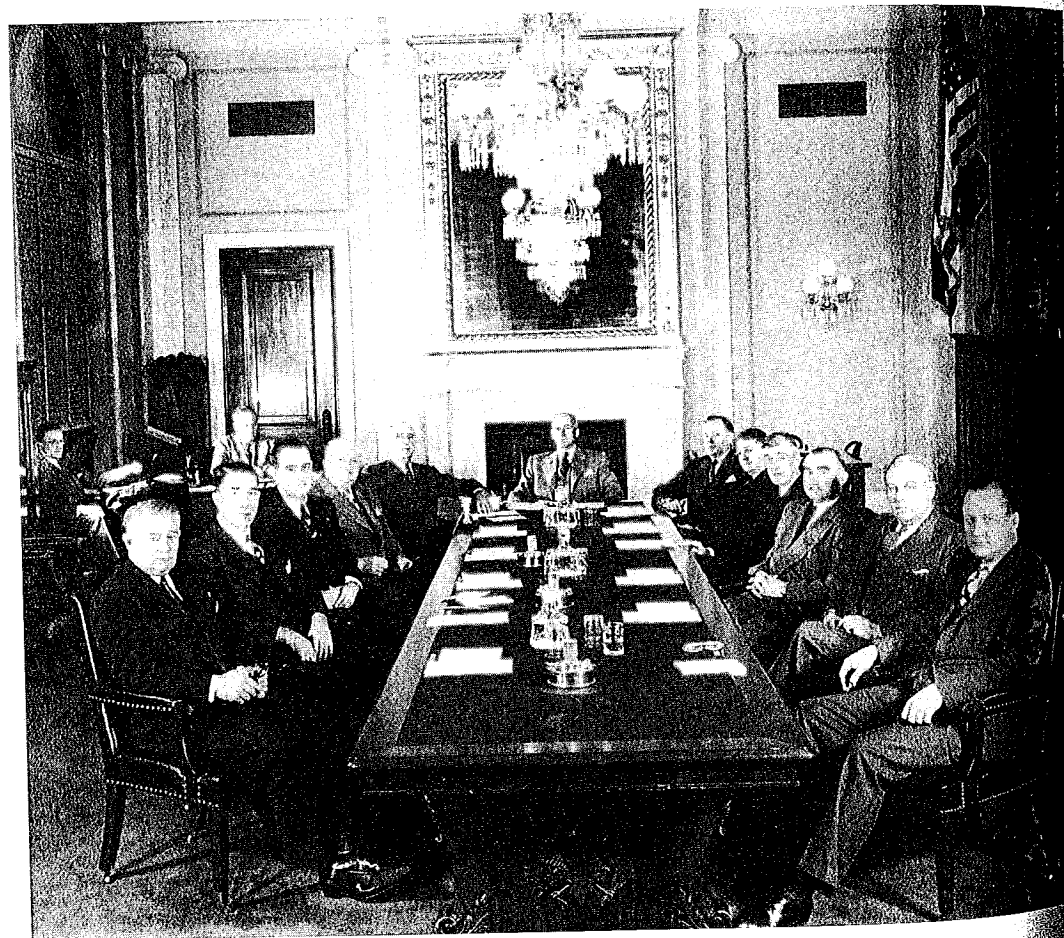




New Senator Lyndon B. Johnson allows new Senator Robert Kerr to take center stage. Senator Clinton Anderson is at right.



The Johnsons at home, August, 1948



Opposite: Johnson joins the Senate Armed Services Committee, January, 1949. From left, Democrats Lester C. Hunt, Estes Kefauver, Lyndon B. Johnson, Virgil Chapman, Richard B. Russell, Chairman Millard E. Tydings; Republicans Styles Bridges, Chan Gurney, Leverett Saltonstall, Wayne Morse, Raymond E. Baldwin, and William Knowland.

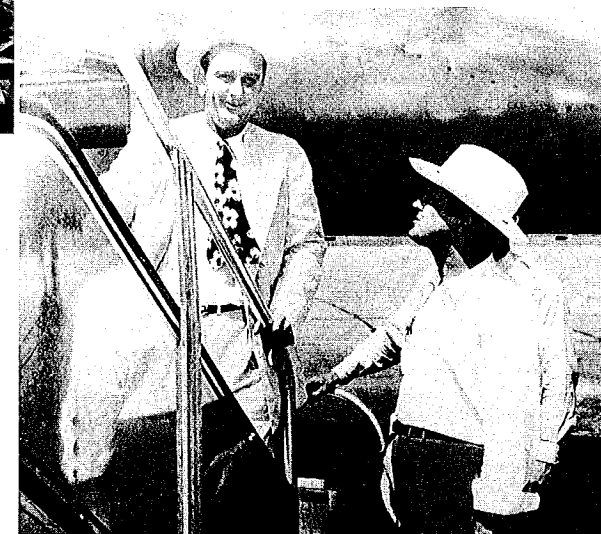


Christmas photographs. *Above*, 1949: from left, Lucia, Rebekah Baines, Josefa, Rodney on Sam Houston's lap, Becky Alexander, Rebekah Bobbitt, O. P. Bobbitt, and their son Phil. *Below*, 1955, at the Johnson Ranch: Aunt Jessie Hatcher, Lucy, Ramon, Sam Houston, Lyndon, Lynda, unidentified



Johnson with Walter Jenkins en route to the office. Congressman Homer Thornberry is in the middle.

Johnson and John Connally at the Austin airport



Christmas, 1950, photograph of staff for *Collier's* magazine. From left, Warren Woodward, Mary Rather, Johnson, Dorothy Nichols, Horace Busby, Glynn Stegall.





At the ranch with his family, after his heart attack, August, 1955



The press conference, with Sam Rayburn (left) and Adlai Stevenson, September, 1955



"Lyndon Johnson Day" at his alma mater, Southwest Texas State Teachers College, November, 1955



On the ranch

Fording the river to get to the ranch





tually it would mean that blacks and whites would “attend the same schools, swim in the same pools, eat together, and eventually, intermarry.” But with the threat so serious, a public display of these emotions was a luxury the South could not afford, and generally in public—as in a nationwide radio address he made on behalf of the southern senators—Russell tried to keep his tone reasonable and moderate, and to concentrate on issues more palatable to northern ears, saying that if the proposed expansion of federal power was adopted, not merely southerners but all Americans would find they had lost some of their freedoms to “hordes of federal bureaucrats” who would in effect be “federal policemen.” On the floor of the Senate, the personality of Richard Russell was as grave, deliberate, judicious, reasonable as ever.

He tried to make the entire Southern Caucus adopt the same tone and arguments—a job made easier by Cotton Ed’s defeat in 1944 and Bilbo’s death in 1947. The last holdout was Tom Connally, and in one of the meetings of the Caucus in Russell’s office, the Georgian faced the old Texan down, in a bitter confrontation in which one man was loud, and the other quiet—and the quiet man won. Over and over, Russell would try to make the other southern senators understand what he understood—that the tactics he was proposing were the best tactics for their cause, and that much as they might personally enjoy picturesquely defying the world, the Cause was all that mattered. Racist pejoratives and stalling tactics antagonized northern senators and inflamed anti-Southern opinion, he said. The South didn’t need antagonism; it needed allies. Furthermore, such tactics made the South, their beloved South, look foolish—foolish and backward. “We’ve got a good case on the merits,” he said at one meeting of the Southern Caucus. “Let’s keep the arguments germane. Let’s see if we can keep our speeches restrained, and not inflammatory.”

The big table at which the Caucus met was round—Russell didn’t want to be at the head of a table—but wherever he sat *was* the head of the table, and the references to blacks as “niggers” and “coons” died out of the Senate debate. The demands that the entire *Journal* of the previous day’s session be read and amended were abandoned. Instead, states’ rights and other constitutional issues (in particular the right to unlimited debate in the Senate, the right that made filibusters effective), along with the argument that civil rights agitation was Communist-inspired—an argument that had proved effective with conservative non-southern senators—became the staples of southern senatorial rhetoric.

And these tactics were indeed the most effective tactics for the South. When during one debate a northern senator sneeringly asked Russell “whether the Senator is going to devote his attention to a discussion of the bill or to the question of the *Journal*,” Russell was able to reply with quiet dignity, “I have discussed only the bill and I have no other purpose.” His discussion was, he always assured the Senate, “without reference to racism.” His voice rang with sincerity when he assured the Senate that interference in the affairs of the South was not necessary, saying, “We’ve had our problems, but we’ve solved them pretty well.”

Journalists took note of the change in southern tone. As one article put it: "The Negro, who is at the heart of the Civil Rights issue, is never mentioned, and none of the Southern coalition . . . ever breaks into the demagogic ranting of a Bilbo or Rankin. Discussion swirls around the parliamentary procedure at issue, and the speeches, though interminable, are germane." The journalists approved the change. As this article said: "Under Russell, filibuster oratory has improved greatly in quality"—as if it was the oratory that mattered, not the cause in which it was employed. There was little fundamental difference between the racial views of Richard Russell—those views expressed with a courtliness and patrician charm that made men refer to him as "knightly"—and the rantings of a Bilbo or Cotton Ed Smith, however much this Russell of the Russells of Georgia might feel that demagoguery was beneath him. The difference lay in their effectiveness. The knightliness accomplished what Richard Russell wanted it to accomplish: made it more difficult for the foes of his beloved Southland to prevail.

AS EFFECTIVE AS RUSSELL'S TACTICS was his personality, for it drew from his colleagues respect as deep as ever. In 1949, when Lyndon Johnson came to the Senate, Richard Russell was fifty-one. The outlines of his once-thin face were beginning to be blurred by flesh, and a paunch was starting to show beneath his senatorial blue (or, on a wild day, dark gray) suits. But there had been no softening of the dignity and reserve that had always, along with the grave, thoughtful demeanor and unfailing courtesy, set him apart from his peers—they were as rigid as ever. The backward tilt of the head had become more pronounced, and since the front of his head was now completely bald, his nose was even more prominent than when Richard Russell had been young; journalists described him in the same terms as had been used years—decades—earlier. "Senator Russell's almost Roman presence is enhanced by more than a suggestion of the eagle in his profile, and, on most occasions, by a marble rigidity of posture and an august manner of speech," Frederic Collins was to write in the *New York Times Magazine*. "His projection of himself toward those he wishes to sway is not chummy but Olympian." He was very conscious of the Senate's position in American political life, and of his position in the Senate—and he brooked no affront to either of them. Once, in 1957, a thirty-year-old reporter newly arrived in Washington, Tom Wicker of the *Winston-Salem Journal*, jokingly repeated in a group including Russell and newly elected Senator Frank Church the explanation Church had given him for his recent upset victory: that he had been "in the middle between two nuts," Idaho's right-wing Senator Herman Welker and the left-wing former Senator Glen H. Taylor.

"No one laughed," Wicker was to recall.

Russell's face froze ominously. I could see Frank Church looking for a way to go through the floor. I had forgotten that both Her-

man Welker and Glen Taylor had been United States senators. No matter what their politics had been, they were not in Richard Russell's presence to be referred to as "nuts" by a young whippersnapper from the press . . . or a junior senator from Idaho.

The son of the man who had said, "You can always be honorable," had what a friend calls "a monumental sense of honor," and it merged with his monumental patriotism. He regarded his responsibility for America's fighting men as a sacred trust. Once, after his Armed Services Committee had held a closed hearing on confidential military information, committee member Wayne Morse, looking for headlines, leaked a piece of that information. When reporters asked Russell to comment, he said he would comment not on the information but on the leak; his comment was one simple word: "dishonorable." Colleagues' confidences were safe with him—always. As his biographer wrote, "His colleagues considered him absolutely trustworthy." When Richard Russell died, a reporter was to say, "a thousand Senate secrets would die with him." When he gave a commitment on a piece of legislation, there was, his colleagues said, never an excuse given later; the commitment was kept. Estes Kefauver, whom Richard Russell despised, had to admit that Russell's "word is his bond." For many senators, Richard Russell embodied what they wanted to be: the quintessential Senator, in all the highest senses of that title. "He was incomparably the truest Senate type," William S. White was to write.

BEHIND THE PERSONALITY was the power—the senatorial brand of power.

Russell's dominance on the Armed Services Committee, a dominance that lasted for more than a quarter of a century, gave him a full measure of power in dealing with other senators—at least with any senator whose state contained an Army camp or an airfield or a naval base (or indeed any defense-related installation), or a major defense contractor. That power was magnified by his role on the Appropriations Committee (of which he would also later become dominant member and then chairman). In 1949, he was still, as he had been since 1933, Chairman of Appropriations' agricultural subcommittee—so that he still stood athwart that strategic Senate narrows, in a position to exact tribute from any senator who needed funding for an agricultural project. Magnifying his power further was his leadership of the Southern Caucus, which of course included in its ranks guardians of other senatorial narrows: chairmen of other two Appropriations subcommittees, other chairmen of Standing Committees, so the power of the South—the power exercised at Russell's command—was interwoven between committees and subcommittees into a very strong web indeed.

If further magnification was needed, it was provided by his role within his party. Richard Russell was the only senator who sat on both the Democratic Policy Committee, which controlled the flow of legislation to the floor, and the Democratic Steering Committee, which controlled the party's committee

assignments. Nor was Russell's power limited to his party's side of the aisle, for the conservative coalition was not limited to one side of the aisle. "I remember so well how Bob Taft had a working relationship with Dick Russell on certain issues," Hubert Humphrey was to recall. The relationship was very discreet—it was once said that Russell and Taft ran the Senate "with a wink and a nod"—and very effective. "Dick Russell would outmaneuver the Republicans five times a day, but he was always getting them when he needed them." When compromises were being worked out on controversial legislation, it wasn't merely Democrats but Republicans who were told to "Check it with Dick." An observer was to write in the 1960s—in words that would to a great extent have been applicable also to the 1940s and 1950s—"No major compromise can be concluded in the Senate without submission to his professional hand." His power was senatorial power: informal, vague, unwritten—and immense.

The use of this power to help other senators is documented in letters, and in senatorial reminiscences—as is the graciousness, the unpretentiousness, even diffidence, with which the assistance was tendered. A freshman senator was to recall how, standing at his desk, he was watching in despair as a bill vital to his future was being voted down on the floor when suddenly the famous Senator Russell, with whom he had hardly ever exchanged a word, was standing beside him. He had read the bill, Russell said, and he thought it was a project worthy of support; he was wondering if he might give a little help with it. Certainly, the freshman senator replied, wondering what Russell could do. Well, Russell said, why don't you bring it up again after the afternoon recess? The young senator wasn't sure what good that would do, but he said he would. When the bill was called that afternoon, he noticed that the Senate floor wasn't as empty as it had been earlier. He recognized the faces of the newcomers: the southerners had arrived. One by one they voted; all the votes were "aye." The young senator was to recall Russell's embarrassment when he sought him out to express his gratitude, and how quickly the older man tried to walk away. "He actually seemed embarrassed to be thanked," the freshman said. Russell never referred to the incident—not even when he wanted the young senator's vote on a matter of his own.

Another freshman senator, newly elected and nervous, was to recall how he told Russell that he had been warned that if he opposed certain legislation, a number of powerful senators might punish him by opposing projects for his state. After listening intently to the freshman's reason for his opposition, Russell said, "Well, I want to say that you ought to go ahead with this cause, and to the best of my ability, I'll see to it you don't get hurt." When a senator asked for help in securing passage of a pet project, Russell would often say no more than "We should be able to put this over." But of course, "this" was indeed "put over," and the freshman was indeed not "hurt"—Russell's power might be vague, hard to define, but, as his biographer Fite notes, "Scores of other sena-

tors . . . turned to 'Dear Dick' for help in getting local projects approved and funded" because they knew that it was his decision that would determine the projects' fate. And the help was invariably given with graciousness and dignity. He was, Fite said, "everybody's favorite uncle."

RUSSELL'S USE of his immense power to punish senators instead of to help them was very seldom referred to—perhaps because it was exercised with the same diffidence; Richard Russell rarely if ever used the direct threat. But, as Meg Greenfield of the *Washington Post* was later to write, "It has not escaped the notice of other senators who are interested in projects for their districts or in good committee assignments for themselves that Russell, like the Lord, has the power both to give and to take away."

And the power *was* used to punish. Senators knew that—and acted accordingly. The number of individual votes that were, over the years, changed by the unspoken threat of its use, no one can know—but combined with Russell's knowledge of and use of the Senate's rules and precedents, and the indefinable, but monumental, power of his personality, the number was enough. Russell may have been afraid that he was going to be "licked," but he wasn't. With Russell as the "General" of the southern forces fighting civil rights legislation against long odds, the South had won in 1942 and 1944; in 1946, even with a President of Russell's own party determined to put through legislation, the South won again.

The South did suffer one defeat during the balance of Harry Truman's first term, but it was not on a piece of legislation. With Truman determined to integrate the armed forces, Russell countered with an amendment to the Selective Service Act that would allow draftees the option of serving in units made up only, as he put it, of "men of their own race and kind." (It was then that Russell raised the spectre of venereal disease: was not the Senate aware of its prevalence among Negroes?; "I could not bear, Mr. President, to confront some young man who would carry through life the marks of some disease contracted by him, through no fault of his own.") Russell couldn't get that amendment through the Senate, but he could keep the Administration from getting *its* amendment through; the President was finally forced to achieve integration through an executive order.

Of all Truman's other proposals—on desegregation of public facilities, on the FEPC, on the poll tax—not one got through the Senate in 1946, 1947, or 1948. With Russell basing his arguments on constitutional grounds ("We are not defending the poll tax as such. We are defending the rights of the States to govern their own elections and to keep Federal police and the Federal government away from the voting places. . . . The passage of these laws will strip the once-proud States of their last remaining rights . . ."), most proposals did not even make it to the floor; outmaneuvering the liberals with a parliamentary tac-

tic they did not understand until it was too late, Russell ended the fight on the poll tax without it even coming to a vote.

As for the anti-lynching bill, what would be the sense of passing it in the House, asked the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, since "it would be impossible to put [it] through in the Senate?" The anti-lynching bill died, and as southern prosecutors declined to indict and southern juries declined to convict, the policemen who gouged out the eyes went unpunished, as did the mob that shot the wives as well as the husbands, and the mobs that did not kill but only whipped and kicked. Under the leadership of Richard Brevard Russell Jr. the Senate was indeed the place where the South did not lose the Civil War. The great gifts for parliamentary rhetoric and maneuver, for personal leadership, of the "knightly" Richard Russell—his courtliness and graciousness, his moderation, his reasonable, genteel words—their cost had to be reckoned in tears and pain and blood. His charm was more effective than chains in keeping black Americans shackled to their terrible past.

OFTEN, DURING THE 1940S (as would also be the case during the 1950s and 1960s), Washington journalists would liken Richard Russell to the great general of the Lost Cause, the general who had been the young Dick Russell's hero, the general after whom a barefoot boy in Winder had named his fort. "A thin gray line is once again deployed against superior forces to resist what the Old South regards as an unwarranted assault on its way of life," as the *New York Times* put it during one senatorial civil rights battle. "The field general is a man whose dignity, integrity and high principle are recognized even by his opponents." Like "the Confederate commander of a century ago, Robert E. Lee, Richard Brevard Russell of Georgia is also a master of tactics and strategy and a much respected, even beloved adversary."

Russell accepted the comparison. His speeches were filled with what one reporter called "the words of war": "surrender," "treason," "appeasement," "retreat." "If we are overwhelmed," he said once, "you will find me in the last ditch." To Sam Ervin, he wrote, "Our position is desperate, for we are hopelessly outnumbered. But we are not going to yield an inch." And the comparison was apt—in more ways than some of the writers apparently realized. Lee was indeed the best of generals, military generals—but he was fighting in the worst of causes. Russell was the best of parliamentary generals.

But his cause was the same cause.

8

"We of the South"

THERE WAS ANOTHER motif as pervasive in Richard Russell's life as power, and it was loneliness.

Within the Senate world, there would for years be speculation about the reason that this man, who possessed "that persuasive charm that no woman can resist" had never married. Some said the explanation was Dick Russell's never-fading adoration for "the greatest woman I've ever known." At least one remark he made lent plausibility to another theory: that the explanation lay partly in his intense ambition, personal and political, both for himself and for his family, which had made him raise up early and never let drop the fallen banner of the Russells. Asked, when he was old, why he had never married, Russell replied to a reporter friend: "That's a question I've been asked many times, and I've asked *myself* many times. I think it was because I was too ambitious to start with. I wanted to be Governor of Georgia younger than any man had ever been in history . . . so I didn't marry until after I was elected, and somehow after that I didn't get around to it, didn't have time."

The denouement of the single episode in which Russell broke his lifelong pattern of "shying away from serious relationships" was viewed as support for this theory. During the 1930s, Russell and Patricia Collins, an Atlanta-born attorney for the Department of Justice in Washington, dated for three years, and were, acquaintances recall, obviously deeply in love. They set a wedding date. And then on the very eve of the wedding, it was canceled; Russell telephoned the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, which had already set the wedding announcement in type to run the next day, to ask him not to print it. Ms. Collins was a Catholic. In the highest circles of Georgia politics there were whispers that, at the very last moment, Richard Russell had finally bowed to the reality that, no matter how popular he might be, in a state with a Baptist-dominated, Catholic-hating Bible Belt, marrying a Catholic might end his political career. Russell and Ms. Collins continued to date frequently in Washington for several more years, and then less frequently, although they were still seeing each other when, in 1947, she told Russell she was going to marry someone else.

Nobody really knows the reason Dick Russell never married—perhaps not even he knew. But he knew the cost. When he was old, that reporter friend asked him whether perhaps it was fortunate that he had never married, and so had been able to concentrate fully on his work, and Russell answered, “Well, no—well, it certainly has permitted me to have more hours to work . . . but I would not recommend it to anyone. If I had my life to do over again, I would certainly get married.”

In Winder, where his mother kept his room furnished as it had been furnished when he was a boy, and where, during the months he lived there every year, he often wandered around the house and the yard barefoot, as he had liked to wander barefoot as a boy, he had his family. His father, still Georgia’s Chief Justice, had died in 1938, at the age of seventy-six—of a heart attack following a long day studying cases in his judicial office—and on a gentle hill behind the house, in a clearing surrounded by pines and red oak trees, Russell erected a gray granite obelisk, monumental in sleepy, small-town Barrow County, and wrote the inscription himself: “Richard Brevard Russell—Son of the Old South, Defender and Builder of the New.” And he took his father’s place at the head of the family table. At the sprawling Russell family gatherings, to which the other twelve children, each of them without exception a success in his or her chosen field, would bring their own children, “Uncle Dick,” surrounded by scores of nephews and nieces, would preside—patriarch of the Russells, once again one of the first families of Georgia. He remained very close to his brothers and sisters; of his brother Robert E. Lee Russell, manager of his early political campaigns, he was to say, “We were about as close as two brothers could be.” As for his mother, the flow of tender letters that had begun between them during his youth didn’t stop when he was a senator. In 1952, the town of Winder held a parade in Ina Dillard Russell’s honor; it was then, as her son rode beside her in an open car, that the newsreel camera for once caught, as pride and joy conquered reserve, a broad smile on Richard Russell’s face. When she died, in 1953, to be buried with her husband under the same tall tombstone, he would draft her inscription: “There has never been a married relationship more tender than existed between this noble woman and her eminent husband.” Thereafter, on his visits to Winder he lived alone in the big white frame house, tended by the family’s elderly black housekeeper, and frequently walked up the hill in back, through pines and holly bushes, to the graveyard, and pattered around it for hours, plucking out weeds and neatening the plots, or just sitting there and thinking. He could think best there, he told a friend, close to his family. When years later, the Senator lay dying in Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, and his brother Henry visited him, Dick told him of a thought that was comforting him—that perhaps dying meant that “we could run jump up in God’s lap like we used to run jump up in Mother and Dad’s lap when we were little boys.”

And in Winder he had friends. So at ease was he in his hometown that

clad in a sweatshirt and stained dungarees, he would sit on a curb with old friends and chat with them for hours. “He just likes to talk,” the editor of the *Winder News* explained. “If he has an enemy in Barrow County, I’ve never heard of it.”

But Richard Russell seemed at home and at ease nowhere except in that little town. “He had warm feelings for individuals, but, outside of his family, he did not express them,” says his biographer, Gilbert Fite. “He was not a man” who could talk about “his personal feelings.” In Georgia—where he had been Speaker and Governor, and now, as senator, was known as “the Georgia Giant,” where he was so respected that no politician dared to run against him—“he had a host of acquaintances and casual friends, and friends who would do almost anything for him,” but “very few close or intimate friends.”

And in Georgia, Dick Russell had been young. In Washington, he was growing older, and traits sometimes deepen, harden, as a man grows older, no matter how much he may wish them not to. “He became,” as his biographer says, “somewhat more aloof.”

“I had always been taught that if decent people asked you to come to their house you had to go,” he was to recall, and for a few years after arriving in Washington in 1933, he accepted at least some of the invitations to parties and dinners that poured in on a bachelor senator. And, his hostesses said, when he wanted to be, there was no one who could be more urbane and charming. But gradually he accepted fewer and fewer invitations, and by the early 1940s he had all but stopped going to parties except for ones given by or for Georgians. Once, during the 1950s, a Washington reporter asked him exactly how often he did go to a party—cocktail or dinner. Leafing through his desk calendar, Russell discovered that he hadn’t been to one for six months.

He stopped attending other social occasions, too. He had enjoyed hunting, for turkey, quail or deer—bird hunting was his favorite sport, and he owned five or six shotguns—and had regularly gone on hunting parties with old friends from Georgia. And he had enjoyed golf. But gradually he began finding excuses to decline invitations to hunting trips. “Frankly, I have no desire to kill more deer as I have killed more than twenty in my time,” he said in response to one invitation. Gradually, he stopped playing golf. It took too much time, he said. As a young man, he had been a ladies’ man; now he was an older bachelor. He still had dates, but less and less frequently.

With members of his staff, the reserve of this man so conscious of the dignity of a senator of the United States was especially marked. During his early years in the Senate, he had made attempts at camaraderie with his assistants and secretaries, but they were forced and didn’t work out very well, and, year by year, they became fewer and fewer. Finally, he almost never joked with them, or even came out of his private office to wander around their work area; he was very formal in dealing with them. Women employees, his biographer says, “were ‘Miss Margaret’ or ‘Miss Rachel’ in the best traditional southern

manner." Some of the members of his staff idolized him; they didn't want to leave him alone in the empty office, and although he never asked them to, when he stayed until six-thirty or seven, as he did most weekday nights, at least one of them would stay in case "the Senator wanted something." But when he would finish for the day, and take a bottle of Jack Daniel's out of his drawer and pour himself a drink, he almost never invited one of them in to have a drink with him. Occasionally, one of them would muster the courage to invite the Senator home for dinner; the acceptances were rare and the invitations grew rare, too.

With his fellow senators, he was invariably courteous, friendly, even cordial. But, more and more, as year followed year, that friendship also had a limit: the point at which intimacies, personal confidences, might have been exchanged but were not, because of the barrier around Richard Russell which was never lowered. He seemed unable to express affection, unable to talk about personal matters, to bridge the distance between himself and even a colleague he liked. The grave demeanor, the judiciousness and reserve, might bring him the respect of his colleagues; it did not make any of them his intimates.

He loved baseball, had in his head the day-to-day batting averages, not only of the Washington Senators but of an impressive number of players around the American League. A longtime tradition of the Senate was that on the season's opening day, senators who liked baseball (and a few selected functionaries such as Secretary of the Majority Felton [Skeeter] Johnston) would attend the game as a group. Russell, his aides say, had a wonderful time going to Opening Day with other senators, but, of course, that was a formal occasion, with the invitations made without any participation on his part being necessary. As for the rest of the season, members of his staff could have gone to games with him, just as they could have invited him to their homes, but one social occasion was as rare as the other. Sometimes the Senator went to a baseball game alone. It was embarrassing for such a man to be alone. If he was the renowned Richard Brevard Russell, the most powerful man in the Senate, why didn't he have anyone to go with? Would some colleague or staff member or acquaintance see him—and feel sorry for him, or tell people that Dick Russell went to baseball games alone? So Russell went to few baseball games.

WHEN THE SENATE was in session, of course, Russell's life was crowded with committee hearings and discussions about legislation and floor tactics, with professional give-and-take with his colleagues. But the Senate wasn't generally in session in the evenings, or on weekends.

The respect—almost awe—in which he was held made it difficult for his colleagues to invite him to their homes. He himself lived, during most of his years in Washington, in a small, two-room hotel suite, first in the Woodner

Hotel, then in the Mayflower; finally, in 1962, he moved into a small apartment, furnished as impersonally as a hotel room, in a cooperative apartment house on the Potomac.

In his hotel room or apartment, he would spend long hours reading, often with a cigarette and a glass of Jack Daniel's at hand, sometimes with the radio on. He still read the *Congressional Record* every day, and after he became a member of the Armed Services Committee he read not only the transcripts of the endless hours of testimony that the committee had taken, but the exhibits—the analyses and studies and charts—that witnesses had entered into the record to supplement their testimony, as well as classified Army, Navy and Air Force internal reports and memoranda. His apartment was filled with books, including a steady stream of books he requested from the Library of Congress; on many Fridays, a stack delivered from the Library for his weekend reading would be on the corner of his desk in the Senate, ready for him to take home. In the apartment, books, some opened, some with slips of paper sticking out of them to mark passages to which he wanted to refer, would be piled on the desk, on chairs, on the floor—mostly history and biography; during his early years in Washington, he read—again—Gibbon's complete *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and in his later years, he read it through a third time.

His life fell into a pattern. He would arrive at the Senate early—at eight or eight-thirty in the morning—and eat breakfast alone in the Senate Dining Room. He would stay at the Senate late. After a day filled with Senate business, and punctuated by lunch at the round table in the dining room, the center of respectful attention whenever he spoke, he would return to his office at four or five o'clock to go through his mail, draft or dictate letters, and return telephone calls. By six-thirty or seven, he would be finished, and would take out the Jack Daniel's and water, and sip a drink or two while listening to the evening news on the radio, or, in later years, watching it on television. When the news was over, he would get up and leave, often through the door from his private office which opened directly onto the corridor, so that he would not have to make conversation with his staff. He generally ate at O'Donnell's Seafood Grill, on E Street, sitting alone at the counter. Then he would go back to his small apartment—that apartment where books were stacked on chairs on which no one ever sat; that apartment in which, unless he turned on the radio, there was no human voice—to spend the evening alone, reading.

"The Senate is my life and work," he told a reporter once. "I don't have any family or home life. If I don't get home till late, that's all right."

AFTER LYNDON JOHNSON'S DISCUSSION with Bobby Baker ("Dick Russell is the power"), in late December 1948, Johnson abruptly dropped his requests for a seat on Appropriations. There was, he would explain, only one way to get close to a man whose life was his work: "I knew there was only one way to see

Russell every day, and that was to get a seat on his committee. Without that we'd most likely be passing acquaintances and nothing more. So I put in a request for the Armed Services Committee." There was less demand for that committee than for Appropriations (or for Foreign Relations or Finance) and four vacant Democratic seats on it, and when, on January 3, the Senate was organized, and the list of Democratic Steering Committee assignments was read, he was given one of those seats. (His other committee was Interstate and Foreign Commerce, which under the chairmanship of Ed Johnson—"Mr. Wisdom"—supervised the oil and natural gas industries vital to Texas, and on which Johnson had an assignment to carry out for those industries in 1949.) Johnson threw himself into the Armed Services Committee's work, and he began dropping by Russell's office to discuss it.

At first, he would drop by only in the late afternoon, after the Senate had adjourned for the day. He was very deferential and formal in his approach. He would not ask the receptionist to tell Senator Russell he was there; instead, he would write a note asking if it would be convenient for Senator Russell to see Senator Johnson, and ask her to take it in. And he would keep the conversation focused on the committee's work, asking Russell questions about it, asking advice on how best to carry out some committee assignment he had been given. And he would listen to the answers, and listen hard. "If you saw them together, you would not see Johnson walking back and forth, and talking, like he usually did," John Connally says. "Russell would be doing the talking. He [Johnson] would be sitting quietly, listening, absorbing wisdom, very much the younger man sitting at the knees of the older man." Had the chairman of Johnson's other committee been given a nickname? The chairman of this committee wasn't neglected. Richard Russell, Johnson began saying, was "the Old Master." The phrase was used frequently—often to the Old Master himself. When Russell offered him a piece of advice, Lyndon Johnson would say, "Well, that's a lesson from the Old Master. I'll remember that."

After a while, the conversations no longer took place only in Russell's office. Russell would be drafting a committee report, or reading over one that he had assigned Johnson to work on, and there might be more work to do on it. Or there might be a line of questioning to be worked out for witnesses in the next day's hearings. Johnson would be helping. Why didn't they finish over dinner? he would suggest. Lady Bird had dinner waiting for him. It would be no trouble at all for her to put on another plate. It would make things easier all around. "You're gonna have to eat somewhere anyway," he would say. And after a few such invitations, Russell accepted one.

When the dinner guest at Thirtieth Place was Richard Russell, Lyndon Johnson's table manners would have pleased even his mother. Says Posi Oltorf, who was occasionally a fellow guest, "He was an entirely different person with Russell than he was ordinarily. There was no reaching, no slurping. Johnson was on his very best behavior."

At Thirtieth Place, moreover, Johnson had his great helpmate, and she was as valuable with Russell as she had been with Rayburn. The help was of a different kind, of course. The bond between Lady Bird Johnson and Sam Rayburn—lovingly daughterly on the one hand, lovingly paternal on the other—was the bond between a fierce, stern man whose fierceness and sternness concealed a terrible shyness and a young woman whose unwavering smile concealed a shyness and timidity just as terrible. And she saw Rayburn, whose portrait was the only one she would place in the living room of the Johnson Ranch, as the exemplar of all that was great in the common American people from which she, her husband, and the Speaker all sprang. Talking of "the Speaker," she says, with a passion very unusual for her: "He was the best of *us*—the best of simple American stock."

Richard Brevard Russell wasn't one of *us*, and had no desire to be, and Lady Bird's keen eyes saw it all in an instant. "I early knew that his father was, I think the chief judge in Georgia, and I remember a very patrician picture of him swearing in his young son, Dick Russell—and I would hear stories [from Georgians] of seeing the Russell family drive into town on a Saturday afternoon with Mrs. Russell sitting very erect and very starched, and extremely well groomed. . . . They were quality." When an interviewer from the Lyndon Johnson Library tries to suggest that her husband and Russell were intimates, Mrs. Johnson quietly sets him straight. "Senator Russell was always—there was a certain aloofness in him, it's my feeling," she says. "Although he had humor and he could have warmth, he was something of a loner. There was an aloofness, and you would be presumptuous to say, 'He's my best friend.' . . . He was a great friend, a dear friend, but he was not the sort of person with whom you could broach intimate things. . . ."

But the love Lady Bird Johnson had for Rayburn was no deeper than the respect she had for Russell. "He was a patriot right through and through," she says. "In appraising him I think you would have to get in the words, 'enormous sense of integrity.' . . . If he told you something, that was so." He was, she says, "a towering person. . . . I never looked at him without admiration." And of course Mrs. Johnson was a very southern woman, very devoted to the ideals and philosophy of the South, and, as she puts it, "Dick Russell was the archetype and bellwether of the South." And, in a way, the help Lady Bird gave her husband with his third *R* was the same she gave him with his second. No one, no matter how reserved, could remain untouched by the warmth with which Lady Bird Johnson would say, as she bid a guest good-bye, "Now you all come back again real soon, you hear." In both cases, her warm graciousness made a man who seldom visited other people's homes feel at home in hers, sufficiently at home so that he would come again and again.

The wisdom of Johnson's choice of committees—his insight that the only way to get to know Russell was to work with him—was documented, for, as Mrs. Johnson says, "As far as trying to sign him up for a dinner party three

months in advance, I doubt if I'd have had much luck, or if I would have had the nerve to try. . . . He was always much sought after for parties, you know, and very unlikely to go. . . . He was our visitor so many times, but it was much more likely to be on the spur of the moment. They'd be working together on something and they would not be finished with it, and Lyndon would say something about, come on and go home with him, and Lady Bird will give us some—whatever we had. That was the way it usually happened." And when he got to the Johnsons, there would be, no matter what the hour, that wonderful welcoming smile.

If the hour wasn't too late, Lynda Bird and Lucy Baines would be awake. "He was always very nice to them and apparently at ease with them," Mrs. Johnson says. "And they remember him with affection." They called him "Uncle Dick" (their parents encouraged them to do so). But there are different types of uncles. "It was with just respect and affection, not intimacy," Mrs. Johnson says. "He did not wish to have too strong a tie to [people], in my opinion. Ties of family, dear Lord, he had them strongly and lovingly, but he just didn't go around becoming intimate with men, women or children." (Speaking of the entire twenty-year relationship between Richard Russell and the Johnsons, during which Russell made scores of visits to the Johnson home, the interviewer from the Johnson Library asked, "Did he ever bring little token-type gifts? I was just wondering, over the years did he bring any kind of little remembrance to you or the children?" "No, not that I remember," Mrs. Johnson replied.)

And after Spring arrived, occasionally, in the late afternoons, Lyndon Johnson would make another suggestion, one to which Russell always responded with uncharacteristic enthusiasm. Asked years later what drew the two men together, Russell mentioned first the sport he loved. "We both like baseball," he explained. "Right after he came to the Senate, for some reason we started going to the night baseball games together." Sometimes Lady Bird was invited to accompany them. "They would buy hot dogs . . . and sit and watch and talk about the prowess of this player or that player." And, she noticed, at baseball games Russell was less "aloof. . . . He really liked that." If no box seats were available, they would sit in the grandstand above the boxes—two tall men in double-breasted suits and fedoras, hot dogs in hands, sitting close together, talking companionably and laughing together.

Johnson's sudden interest in baseball surprised people aware of his previous total lack of interest in any type of sport. "I doubt that Lyndon Johnson had been to a baseball game in his life until he heard that Dick Russell enjoyed the sport," John Connally says. Connally, the only one of Johnson's aides who dared to joke with him, would say, "Well, I see you've become a baseball fan. Do you know the pitcher from the catcher?" He [Johnson] would smile and laugh, and say, 'You know I've always loved baseball.' I said, 'No, I've never been aware of that.'" But Connally understood: "He knew Dick Russell liked baseball games, so he went to games with Russell."

He began spending time with Russell not only after the Senate recessed for the day but before it convened. Although Johnson had generally eaten breakfast in bed ever since, with his wedding ceremony, he had acquired someone to bring it to him, he now began rising early and breakfasting in the senators' private dining room—as it happened, at the same hour that Russell ate breakfast there. More and more frequently, the two senators had breakfast together, discussing Armed Services Committee business.

And, more and more, he was spending time with Russell on weekends. Not many senators worked on Saturdays, but Russell did, of course, and Johnson did, too. Years later, he would say:

With no one to cook for him [Russell] at home, he would arrive early enough in the morning to eat breakfast at the Capitol and stay late enough at night to eat dinner [at O'Donnell's]. And in these early mornings and late evenings I made sure that there was always one companion, one Senator, who worked as hard and as long as he, and that was me, Lyndon Johnson. On Sundays the House and Senate were empty, quiet and still, the streets outside were bare. It's a tough day for a politician, especially if, like Russell, he's all alone. I knew how he felt for I, too, counted the hours till Monday would come again and knowing that, I made sure to invite Russell over for breakfast, lunch, brunch or just to read the Sunday papers.

This necessitated some juggling because once Sam Rayburn had been the older man having brunch and reading papers with Lyndon, but the juggling was made easier by the fact that there was more than one meal on Sundays. During his last years in the House, Johnson had begun inviting a number of New Dealers—most of them Rayburn's friends, like Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas and Tommy Corcoran and Jim Rowe—to Thirtieth Place for Sunday dinner. At seven o'clock he would switch on the radio so that they could all snarl at Drew Pearson's revelations about congressional activities. Rayburn enjoyed being one of that group, and had begun coming for dinner instead of brunch, so now Russell was invited for brunch, Rayburn for dinner. Frequent guests at Thirtieth Place noticed that, as Oltorf says, "You never, ever, saw them at Lyndon's house together." "Lyndon didn't want his two daddies to see how he acted with the other one," explains Jim Rowe.

Not all the time Johnson and Russell spent together on weekends was spent working, or reading the papers. For Russell found that this new senator from Texas shared—enthusiastically—some of his own interests. Those new enthusiasms that Johnson now revealed were as surprising to his assistants as his love for baseball. One, for example, was the War Between the States. All his life, Johnson had displayed a distaste for discussing history as intense as his antipathy for any subject that required reading: a feeling that went beyond lack of interest, and was disdain. That feeling had included the Civil War. Attempt-

ing to convince Lady Bird to marry him, he had assured her that "I shall take you . . . when you are mine" to the Civil War battlefields "and all of those most interesting places"; during the fifteen years since their wedding, she had been trying—in vain—to persuade him to take her at least once. Now Johnson told Russell that he had heard that Russell had a great familiarity with the battlefields. He himself was fascinated with the tactics and the heroism that had been demonstrated on them, he said; the next time Russell visited one of them, he would certainly consider it an honor to be allowed to accompany him. And, on more than one occasion, he was.

Discussing in later years his early relationship with Russell, Johnson gave it a patina of generosity. "He was my mentor and I wanted to take care of him," he said. But contemporary witnesses to that relationship "snickered behind their hands," in the words of Bobby Baker, who says that Johnson was "pressing an ardent courtship on" Russell. "He flattered him outrageously." Had Senator Russell been a woman, "He would have married him." But Johnson's courtship of older men had been the subject of snickers at San Marcos and in the House of Representatives, and those courtships had achieved their ends.

And, with Russell, too, as Baker also says, "there's absolutely no doubt that his campaign worked." When, years later, it was suggested to Russell that he and Johnson were dissimilar personalities, the Georgian replied, "Well, I suppose that's the public impression. Johnson and I had a good many things in common. . . . We just hit it off personally together." (The things they didn't have in common, and that might have repelled Russell, Johnson's iron self-control kept to a minimum when they were together; the inhaler, for example, was never in use in Russell's presence.) Within a remarkably short time after he was sworn in, this freshman senator was spending far more time than any other senator with the Senate's most powerful member.

BUT RUSSELL WASN'T RAYBURN. Rayburn hungered, yearned, for love—for a wife, for children, in particular for a son. It wasn't a son that Richard Russell wanted, it was a soldier—a soldier for the Cause. Johnson may have made Russell fond of him, but fondness alone would never have gotten Johnson what he wanted from Russell. As another southern senator, John Stennis of Mississippi was to put it, Russell "wasn't a bosom friend with anyone when it came to serious matters of government and constitutional principles." For Johnson to get what he wanted from Russell, he would have to prove to him that they had the same feelings on the issue that dominated Russell's life.

So Johnson's early efforts with Russell also included a speech. Delivered on Wednesday, March 9, 1949, it was his first speech on the Senate floor, and it was a major one: it took him an hour and twenty-five minutes, speaking in deliberate, grave tones, to read the thirty-five double-spaced typewritten pages that had been placed on the portable lectern that had been put on his desk. And

it was delivered as a centerpiece of a southern filibuster against Truman's proposed civil rights legislation that would have given black Americans protection against lynching and against discrimination in employment, and that also would have made it easier for them to vote.

First, he defended the use of the filibuster. The strategy of civil rights advocates, he said, "calls for depriving one minority of its rights in order to extend rights to other minorities." The minority that would be deprived, he explained, was the South.

"We of the South who speak here are accused of prejudice," Lyndon Johnson said. "We are labeled in the folklore of American tradition as a prejudiced minority." But, he said, "prejudice is not a minority affliction: prejudice is most wicked and most harmful as a majority ailment, directed against minority groups." The present debate proved that, he said. "Prejudice, I think, has inflamed a majority outside the Senate against those of us who speak now, exaggerating the evil and intent of the filibuster. Until we are free of prejudice there will be a place in our system for the filibuster—for the filibuster is the last defense of reason, the sole defense of minorities who might be victimized by prejudice." "Unlimited debate is a check on rash action," he said, "an essential safeguard against executive authority"—"the keystone of all other freedoms." And therefore cloture—this cloture which "we of the South" were fighting—is "the deadliest weapon in the arsenal of parliamentary procedures." By using it, a majority can do as it wishes—"against this, a minority has no defense."

Then he turned to the substance of the legislation. Racial prejudice was not the issue, Lyndon Johnson said. Prejudice, he said, is "evil," and "perhaps no prejudice is so contagious or so dangerous as the unreasoning prejudice against men because of their birth, the color of their skin, or their ancestral background." And, he said, he himself was not prejudiced. "For those who would keep any group in our Nation in bondage, I have no sympathy or tolerance." But, he said, prejudice was not the reason that the South was fighting the civil rights bills.

When we of the South rise here to speak against . . . civil rights proposals, we are not speaking against the Negro race. We are not attempting to keep alive the old flames of hate and bigotry. We are, instead, trying to prevent those flames from being rekindled. We are trying to tell the rest of the Nation that this is not the way to accomplish what so many want to do for the Negro. We are trying to tell the Senate that with all the sincerity we can command, but it seems that ears and minds were long ago closed.

He himself was opposed to the poll tax, Lyndon Johnson said, but the Constitution gave the states, not the federal government, the right to regulate elections, and Truman's anti-poll tax proposals were therefore "wholly uncon-

stitutional and violate the rights of the States." He himself, "like all other citizens, detest[ed] the shameful crime of lynching," he said, "but we"—the southern senators—are trying to tell the other senators "that the method proposed in the civil rights legislation will not accomplish what they intend"; lynching is dying out; "I want to remind senators of the changing character of the South: an enlightened public already has rendered such a law virtually unnecessary even if it were not unwise in its scope."

At times, Johnson's rhetoric grew so impassioned that he went even further than the other southerners. He denounced the proposed FEPC, for example, in terms that seemed to suggest that it might lead to a return of something not far from slavery.

It is this simple: if the Federal Government can by law tell me whom I shall employ, it can likewise tell my prospective employees for whom they must work. If the law can compel me to employ a Negro, it can compel that Negro to work for me. It might even tell him how long and how hard he would have to work. As I see it, such a law would do nothing more than enslave a minority.

So harmful would the proposed FEPC legislation be (it "would necessitate a system of Federal police officers such as we have never before seen. . . . It would do everything but what its sponsors intend. . . . It would do nothing more than resurrect ghosts of another day to haunt us again. It would incite and inflame the passions and prejudices of a people to the extent that the chasm of our differences would be irreparably widened and deepened") that, Johnson said, "I can only hope sincerely that the Senate will never be called upon to entertain seriously any such proposal again." And he presented one ingenious new rationale—a "novel argument," the *Washington Post* called it—to support the right to filibuster. In the recent presidential election, he said, Harry Truman had been far behind. "But there was no cloture rule on the man in the White House. There was no rule limiting him to an hour's debate because two-thirds of the Nation thought they had heard from him all they could hear, or all they wanted to hear." So Truman had kept talking. Because "Mr. Truman . . . dared to keep speaking, because Mr. Truman [did] not bow before the opinion of the majority . . . the people were listening and were changing their minds."

In general, however, his arguments were calm, reasonable, moderate. They were based on the constitutional rights of states and senators—in particular, in the case of senators, on the right to unlimited debate—and on the contention that civil rights legislation was not needed because the South was solving its racial problems on its own, and that such legislation would only inflame passions.

In later years, some journalists and historians would make much of his statements in his maiden Senate speech that his opposition to civil rights legis-

lation was based not on racial prejudice but on constitutional grounds, that, as *Time* magazine put it, "He had no quarrel with the aims of civil rights advocates, only their methods." He had indeed said this—but so had Richard Russell. Johnson's arguments in his maiden speech closely mirrored the arguments Richard Russell had made familiar, the arguments Russell had persuaded southern senators to adopt, the arguments, reasonable-sounding but unyielding, that if accepted would leave southern black Americans as unprotected as they had always been against mob violence and intimidation, against discrimination in the workplace and in the general conditions of life, as unable as they had always been to vote as freely as white Americans.

Russell was very pleased with Johnson's speech. He had been given a copy of it on the previous day, and after reading it, he had contacted the other southern senators—telephoning many of them personally—to tell them he would appreciate their presence on the Senate floor when Johnson spoke. He had insured a high attendance in the Press Gallery by telling reporters that Johnson's maiden speech would be, as reporter Leslie Carpenter put it, "worth a story." When Johnson had finished speaking, and was standing for a moment taking sips of water from a glass a page had placed on his desk, the southern senators hurried over to congratulate him. A "long line" of southerners "formed to shake [Johnson's] hand," a reporter wrote. Russell was the first man on it. Johnson's speech, Russell was to say, was "one of the ablest I have ever heard on the subject."

LYNDON JOHNSON'S MAIDEN SPEECH was delivered during one of the century's most bitter civil rights battles, for Truman's dramatic 1948 election victory—after a campaign during which his commitment to civil rights never wavered, a campaign, furthermore, in which black voters played a newly important role in key northern cities—had combined with the Democratic recapture of Congress and the arrival on Capitol Hill of aggressive civil rights advocates like Hubert Humphrey and Paul Douglas, plus a rising public outcry against Jim Crow, to give liberals confidence that the long-awaited day of social justice was at last at hand, that Congress's Southern Bloc could no longer stand in its way. "The President can get most of his program, and without so much compromise, if he constantly calls upon the great public support manifest for him in this election," the liberal columnist Thomas L. Stokes wrote. Even Arthur Krock agreed that this time "it seems improbable that" the southern citadel could stand.

But as the southern senators realized when they caucused on January 13, their general was ready. He saw the cause in which he was fighting as holy, and he was ready to battle for it. Yes, Richard Russell told a reporter, the odds against the South were indeed long. "It is clear that the only thing we can do now is to gird our loins and shout the cry of centuries: 'The enemy comes: to

our tents, O Israel!' " And he was armed with more than battle cries. No sooner had Truman won than Russell had begun throwing up his breastworks; even before the Senate convened, his aides were drawing up a list of all federal laws that would expire during the first six months of 1949 so that, as he would later explain, he would "know if there are any of them of any importance that will build up a logjam of discussion behind . . . the civil rights bills"—in other words, any whose passage the Administration could not afford to have delayed, so that threat of delay in general Senate activity by a civil rights filibuster would be more effective. And this scouting expedition found pay dirt: federal rent control laws—the only protection against exorbitant rents for millions of families in northern cities—were scheduled to expire on March 31. If the southerners could hold the floor into March, pressure would mount on northern senators to surrender on civil rights so that a bill extending rent control could be brought to the floor and passed. And there were other Administration proposals—to repeal Taft-Hartley, to continue the European Recovery Program, to strengthen NATO—that could not move along the legislative path so long as southerners held the floor, and that could therefore be held hostage to civil rights; Russell "made it clear that if Truman and his legislative leaders pushed any plan to [impose] cloture, the President's entire legislative program might be in jeopardy." The great general renewed his old alliances, including the one that consisted of a "wink and a nod." The fervently isolationist Robert Taft wanted something: the defeat or reduction of Truman's proposals for international cooperation and mutual aid. Although Russell was, of course, no isolationist, *The Nation* now reported that "a number of former influential internationalists and interventionists are modifying their position" to conform to Taft's; these internationalist senators were southerners. When an amendment was introduced to reduce Truman's proposed budget for the European Recovery Program, Senate observers understood at once that the vote on this amendment would be crucial, for, as one wrote, "it will forecast the Senate's position on other questions of foreign policy." And the amendment's sponsors were Taft—and Russell. The price for Russell's support, *The Nation* was to explain, was "Taft's help in scuttling the civil rights program."

Taft was the bellwether for about half the Republican senators; the bellwether for the other half was Vandenberg. As the Senate's president *pro tempore* in 1948, Vandenberg, citing those loopholes in Rule 22, had said that "the integrity of congressional procedures" gave him "no alternative" to ruling against liberal attempts to impose cloture. He said that while cloture could be applied on a debate on a bill that was already on the floor, it could not be applied on a debate on a motion to bring a bill to the floor (a ruling which of course made the threat of cloture almost totally ineffective).

The way to keep Vandenberg as an ally, Russell told his southerners, was to make the 1949 cloture vote a vote on the validity of Vandenberg's 1948 ruling, which the Republicans who respected the old senator would be reluctant to

repudiate. Moreover, so long as Vandenberg held to his position on cloture, his towering reputation would give other Republicans the screen of parliamentary complexity when they voted against cloture, and their support would allow the southerners to hold the floor. Therefore, Russell told his troops, the emphasis in the 1949 battle must be kept on the point that Vandenberg had emphasized: the right of unlimited debate. Their self-discipline must be tighter than ever; in their speeches they must limit the irrelevancies. As soon as the Administration brought up any motion to make the civil rights bill the pending business of the Senate, or to strengthen Rule 22, the southerners must take to the floor—and keep the debate on that one point. Russell's strategy worked. As the Administration's plan to reverse the cloture ruling became apparent, *The New Republic* would report that Vandenberg was "working busily behind the scenes to vindicate his original decision."

In addition, like the incomparable legislative strategist he was, Russell made his first stand not on the civil rights bill, and not on the motion to take up the bill. Majority Leader Lucas, with the full weight of the White House behind him, had made a motion to change the Senate rules to allow cloture to be applied on a motion to take up a bill. The southerners launched a filibuster on *that* motion. This gave the South one additional line of defense. Should it be lost, there would still be two other positions to fall back to.

And the South didn't lose. Public pressure for cloture—for civil rights—mounted steadily. There were black faces in the Senate corridors. The NAACP announced that its secretary, Walter F. White, "has virtually moved to Washington to talk with the necessary people." Editorialists raged. But somehow the votes to invoke cloture were never there, and after weeks of skirmishing, the focus was shifting to the implications of the filibuster for rent control and other bills, and Lucas was confessing that the "logjam" on Senate business was intolerable. "The filibuster could go on for weeks," the Majority Leader said, and while it was going on, "rent control would go out the window"—and other major bills might not come to a vote, either.

Then, the day after Lyndon Johnson gave his maiden speech, Vice President Barkley, presiding over the Senate, ruled that cloture could be applied to a motion. Russell instantly appealed, called for a vote, and, reading previous cloture precedents, said that Barkley was wrong and Vandenberg right—that Vandenberg's ruling had in fact been a model of statesmanship and wisdom. Vandenberg then rose to reply to Barkley, and said that while he was in favor of civil rights legislation and wanted to change Rule 22, the way to change the rule was "not simply to disregard what it clearly meant," as Barkley had done. "Under such circumstances there [would be] no rules, except the transient, unregulated wishes of a majority," he said. The only way to change the rules, he said, was through the method authorized by the rules—Rule 22, actually—through a two-thirds cloture vote.

With that speech, the fight was over. Walter White heard it "with sinking

heart." "Mr. Vandenberg has . . . given an aura of respectability to those who wanted an excuse," he said. When the vote was taken on Barkley's ruling, Russell had twenty-three Republican votes to go with twenty-three Democratic votes, for a total of forty-six. The pro-civil rights vote was forty-one.

The embattled group of southern senators had won—and they knew whom they owed their victory to. "With less than 25 percent of the membership of the Senate, the Southerners have won one of the most notable victories in our history," Harry Byrd wrote Virgil Chapman. "The credit goes mainly, of course, to our great leader, Dick Russell. . . . I do not think that even Robert E. Lee . . ."

A great general does not allow a vanquished enemy to escape from the battlefield, and with the votes in his pocket, Richard Russell was in a position to exact vengeance on those who had dared to try liberalizing the cloture rule. Suggesting "to his cohorts that the opposition be taught a lesson," as one writer put it, he pushed through the Senate a "compromise" on cloture. Under it, cloture could in the future be applied to motions as well as to bills. But under it, also, cloture would no longer require only the votes of two-thirds of senators present, which had been the requirement in the past—a requirement that would, if only a bare quorum of forty-nine senators were present, have allowed cloture to be imposed by as few as thirty-three votes. Under Russell's "compromise," cloture would now require, no matter how many senators were present, the votes of two-thirds of the entire Senate—sixty-four votes. After Truman's victory, after all the rising hopes for civil rights, not only did the Senate citadel against civil rights still stand, its walls were actually higher than before.

IN LATER YEARS, it would become an accepted part of the Lyndon Johnson legend that, apart from his maiden speech, he distanced himself from the southern fight in 1949. He gave the impression—an impression accepted by historians—that he refused to become part of the Southern Caucus that met under Russell's leadership. After her extensive conversations with Johnson, Doris Kearns Goodwin wrote that "he decline[d] Russell's invitation to join the Southern Caucus." In their biography of Johnson, Evans and Novak wrote that "In his first weeks as a Senator . . . Johnson made clear that he would not attend the Southern Caucus." And this belief is understandable, not only because of the convincingness with which Johnson made his statements, but because of statements by William H. Darden, who was one of Russell's secretaries from 1948 to 1951 and later became an ally of Johnson's. (As President, Johnson appointed Darden a judge.) Darden said flatly in an oral history interview with the Lyndon Johnson Library that "Senator Johnson did not participate in that Southern Caucus." And when the author interviewed him in 1986, he said flatly, "I was the one who would notify the southern senators of the meetings. Russell always told me to say there will be a meeting of the 'constitutional Democrats.' I would not call Lyndon Johnson. Russell would tell me who to call."

Because of his determination to become President, Johnson was certainly desperate to avoid being identified with the Caucus. Once, returning to his office at about the time a Caucus meeting ended, he was unexpectedly confronted in the corridor outside the main door to 231 by an Associated Press reporter. When the reporter began asking him about the Caucus, Johnson moved past him and opened the door. When the reporter began to follow him through it, Johnson pushed it shut and held it closed against the reporter's efforts to open it. An astonished Connally and Busby saw the Senator bracing himself against the door while saying loudly, "No, no. No, no." "After he got the door shut," Busby says, "he turned and went into his [private] office." Summoning Busby, he explained, "That little shit from the AP wanted me to comment."

But Johnson's later contention that he had refused to join the Southern Caucus would have come as a shock to Richard Russell, had he been alive to read it. While Russell *was* alive—in 1971, shortly before his death—an interviewer said to him, "I read where he [Johnson] would not attend your southern conference." Russell interrupted to correct him. "Yes, he did," he said. "Yes, he did. He did attend it. He attended all of them until he was elected Leader."

Russell furnished the interviewer with details of his typically unpressuring invitation to Johnson to attend. "I called him and said, 'Now we're having this meeting on this and I don't want to embarrass you—I don't know what your views are on this, but I want to tell you about the meeting and invite you if you want to come, but if you don't want to come, nobody but you will ever know that I ever called you.' Well, that made a tremendous impression on Johnson—he hadn't been accustomed to that kind of policy . . . well, he came to the meeting. . . ."

In fact, it appears that Russell was mistaken in saying that Johnson attended all the Southern Caucuses. After one, on January 12, 1949, Russell told *New York Times* reporter Clayton Knowles that Johnson had not attended because he was "at another committee meeting." There is, however, reason to believe that Johnson attended at least some meetings of the Southern Caucus. The Russell Library in Athens, Georgia, says that Russell's papers contain no lists of the names of the senators who attended the various Southern Caucuses, and the author has not been able to find a list in any newspaper. And the total number of senators who attended each meeting not infrequently varies from newspaper to newspaper. But after one caucus in February, 1949, the *New York Times* reported that "twenty-one [Southern Democrats] met in Russell's office." The *Times* did not name the twenty-second southerner, but all news accounts agree that the liberal Florida Senator Claude Pepper was never invited to Southern Caucus meetings. During the 1949 fight, a second southerner—Estes Kefauver of Tennessee—announced that he would not support the southern stand on cloture. The *New York Times* article on the next Southern Caucus did not specifically give the number of senators who attended, but said, "The caucus counted two of the twenty-two southern senators—Pepper and Kefauver—"

as lost and gone over to the . . . opposition." The *Washington Post* article said, "Southern senators caucused," and "some twenty Southern senators are" united against cloture. And while it may (or may not) have been true that Judge Darden didn't call Johnson's office, *someone* called. Mary Rather would make an entry on Johnson's Desk Diary when she was notified that a Caucus was scheduled. In the early days of 1949 alone, she made such entries for February 11, February 24, March 1, March 5, March 11, March 14 and March 15, sometimes entering them as "Meeting of Southern Senators," sometimes referring to them by the phrase Russell preferred: for example, "Saturday, March 5—10:30 AM, Constitutional Democrats Meeting." And she told the author that while Johnson didn't attend all the southern meetings, "I'm sure he attended some of them."

And Johnson's contention would have come as a shock to journalists who, over the years, interviewed southern senators about him, for these senators told them that Johnson had attended some of the Caucuses. In 1958, members of *Time* magazine's Washington bureau interviewed a number of southern senators for a cover story on Johnson, and the story dealt with the matter this way: "During his first Senate days he was invited to a Southern caucus by . . . Russell. There was an argument over Southern strategy in fighting a proposed change in the Senate's cloture rule, and Johnson sided with Russell, who was both pleased and impressed." *Time* correspondent James L. McConaughy had been told about the same incident in 1953, apparently by Russell himself. He reported that "Russell knew little about Johnson until he invited him one day to attend a caucus of Southern senators . . . There was a fight over strategy; Johnson sided with Russell." In 1963, journalist Margaret Shannon was to write in the *Atlanta Constitution* that "authoritative sources say"—she does not identify the sources, but from the story they appear to be sources close to both Johnson and Russell—that Johnson had, at one early meeting of the Caucus, seen with his own eyes (and been deeply impressed by) the accuracy of Bobby Baker's statement that "Dick Russell was *the* power." Shannon wrote that "At the first Southern Caucus that Johnson attended, Senator Russell had occasion to chew out Texas' then senior senator, Tom Connally, as no other Texan would have dared to do and as perhaps no other senator would have dared to, either."

The contention that Johnson was distancing himself from the southern fight would also have come as a shock to the southern senators; on March 7, 1949, John Stennis, for example, replied to a correspondent who inquired about Johnson's role: "Senator Lyndon Johnson is cooperating fully with us in this fight to prevent the adoption of the cloture rule."

ALL THROUGH 1949, the fight went on. Victory did not lessen Russell's vigilance; look what had happened at Antietam! And in June, the need for vigilance

was demonstrated. Another anti-lynching bill, Russell noticed, had been quietly slipped onto the Senate Calendar. The general decided to post sentries.

"In view of our experience in the past when one of these bills was almost passed by unanimous consent due to the absence from the floor of all Senators opposing it . . . one Senator from the South" must be "responsible for watching the floor each day to see that no legislative trickery is employed to secure the passage of any of these bills," Russell wrote to the members of the Southern Caucus. The schedule for this "guard duty," Russell said, would be drawn up by his aide William Darden. Johnson was one of those sentries. "Relative to my 'guard duty,' I will do my best when Mr. Darden notifies me," Johnson replied. And even on the most controversial measures, Johnson's vote was a vote of which Russell could be confident. In May, for example, he voted for the passage of an amendment, proposed by Bilbo's successor, James Eastland of Mississippi, to the District of Columbia Home Rule Bill. The amendment would have made segregation by race mandatory in public accommodations in the nation's capital.

And, of course, during all these months, not only while the Senate was in session but in the evenings and on weekends, Richard Russell was spending a lot of time alone with Lyndon Johnson. We do not know what these two men talked about, but we do know that Russell, a notably sharp-eyed observer of his colleagues—and a man who on racial matters was the most suspicious of men—had no suspicions at all about Lyndon Johnson. He had not the slightest doubt about Johnson's feelings about civil rights, about his loyalty to the Cause. "This great movement to [restrict] cloture—Johnson stood right with us on that," Russell was to say. "Our political philosophy was very closely parallel."

All that year, moreover, there were the baseball games, the dinners and Sunday brunches at the Johnson home, the outings to the Civil War battlefields. All that year, the two men were working together on Armed Services Committee matters. And when Johnson had a problem in some other area of Senate business, he would ask Russell's advice. "In a way without boasting because he was a new senator then and I had been there for years, he kind of put himself under my tutelage, or he associated himself with me you might say—that sounds better, I hope you can use that," Russell would tell an interviewer.

Johnson's attentions to him, his courtship, flattered and pleased Russell not only emotionally, of course, but, more importantly, in an intellectual, dispassionate way. Russell, after all, had himself zeroed in on power in the Senate from the moment of his arrival there, and was, in his coolly rational way, very aware of his own position in the Senate. He understood Johnson's tactics and appreciated them. "Senator Russell was extremely favorably impressed by how he just got started on the right foot and seemed to know where the sources of power were, and how to proceed," Darden would say.

Russell was also impressed by other qualities that Johnson possessed: his diligence, for one. Russell had little patience with colleagues not familiar with

all the facts regarding a piece of legislation. Men had said of Richard Russell that he read the *Congressional Record* every day; now men were saying that about Lyndon Johnson. No one could fool a senator who worked as hard as did Russell about how hard another senator was working, and he saw that now, at last, there was another senator who worked as hard as he. He was impressed—this general who worried that he was letting down his Cause by not being sufficiently in tune with the modern age—by “how well-organized his [Johnson’s] office was”; he was impressed by Johnson’s energy and drive, by how he got things done.

Lyndon Johnson, Richard Russell was to say, “was a can-do young man.” He had played tutor or patron to other young senators, he was to say; Johnson “made more out of my efforts to help him than anyone else ever had.” The master legislator, the matchless parliamentarian, knew that there was another master in the Senate now.

9

Thirtieth Place

WHEN LYNDON JOHNSON called Lady Bird to tell her he would be bringing Dick Russell home for dinner in a few minutes, she always had something ready for them to eat. She had something ready every evening, no matter how late the hour, for she never knew when Lyndon would call to say, “I’ll be home in twenty minutes. We’ve got four guests for dinner,” and when he got home, he didn’t want to be kept waiting. As he walked through the door, he would say without preamble, “We’re hungry, Bird. Let’s get dinner on the table.” He had been doing this for years, often calling just as he was leaving his office, four guests—or six or eight—in tow.

Having something ready was easier now, for with the money rolling in from the Austin radio station they had bought in 1943, they had hired a cook, a young African-American woman from Texas, Zephyr Wright. But Johnson had begun bringing guests home before 1943—before they had even owned a house, in fact: while they were still living, without any domestic help, in an apartment on Connecticut Avenue—and Lady Bird had always had something ready then, too, along with her warm, welcoming smile. And often her husband didn’t want a simple dinner. “I’m bringing four guests home tonight,” he would say. “Let’s have something special.” And if he didn’t consider it special enough, his temper would boil over. One year, he had announced in advance that he would be bringing Sam Rayburn home on the Speaker’s birthday. “The dinner was turkey hash,” recalls the journalist Margaret Mayer, who was temporarily working for Johnson and living at Thirtieth Place at the time, “and Lyndon flew into a rage—a *rage!* ‘What do you mean serving turkey hash for Mr. Sam’s birthday?’ ” (Mr. Sam said, “ ‘If I had my choice of anything I could have, there is nothing I’d rather have for my birthday than Zephyr’s turkey hash,’ ” Ms. Mayer recalls. “That stopped *that* explosion.”) And there were the meals with staff members—his own staff, or lower-ranking officials in government agencies whom Johnson needed for something at the moment; “Lady Bird makes me feel as important as Chief Justice [Frederick] Vinson when she