

*Shewer  
Diagnosed with  
MS in Dec 1973*

Barbara Jordan

*January 30, 1973*

*She seemed  
down!!*

I walked in and she was yawning. I kidded her and said she wasn't tired already--that it was good to see her here and not riding around in Texas. She said "You were in on the making."

She started by saying, "It's all right but it's nothing I'd want to do for the rest of my life--being a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. It's the worst of times to be a member of congress, with everyone worrying about who has the power and about the confrontations we're supposed to be having. The old men are frustrated. They don't know what to do and they won't do anything. They'll make some more speeches and that will be it. Nothing will be done. I don't see how anything can be done." Then into defense budget and how the increases are for more than manpower and how if anyone doubted the intent of the administration, the budget would show them. That she'd have her staff do a few things on the power question. "But I'm off the hook. If the leadership can't figure out how to deal with the President then a Freshman certainly can't be expected to."

Re committee assignment. "I got out the book and looked at each committee and its jurisdiction to see which one I wanted. A number of people called me to ask me to go on <sup>two</sup> Education and Labor, <sup>Committee</sup> But I dismissed Education and Labor completely. They said there was not Texan on the committee; ✓ But there was nothing else I could add to it. There are

several blacks and the committee is loaded with liberals. So what if a person from Texas was added to the list? Then people told me that the committee's legislation is always written on the floor and never accepted it's so lopsided. That's another reason why I didn't want that committee. <sup>AP</sup> Being a lawyer and having been on the jurisprudence committee in the Texas legislature, I was interested in the Judiciary Committee, with civil rights, constitutional amendments, the administration of criminal justice. So I wrote a letter to my zone representative Omar <sup>Burleson</sup> whom I had never met and one to Wilbur Mills expressing my preference. Then, to weld it together I called Lyndon Johnson and asked him to call Mr. Mills and Mr. <sup>Burleson</sup> to put in a word in my behalf. And he did. <sup>Then</sup> when I went to visit with chairman of the <sup>(Peter Rodino)</sup> committee I learned that his best friend was Jack Valenti from Texas. So I called Jack Valenti and he called the chairman asking him to help me. <sup>P</sup> I just brought all these things together (arms sweeping inward in hugging motion). I understand that when the committee met--it's supposed to be secret, <sup>but</sup> I heard <sup>that</sup> when they got to the Judiciary Committee with its 5 vacant spots, Wilbur Mills opened the discussion by saying, Now what are we going to do after we give the first spot to Barbara Jordan." Smile!

When I asked about Democratic caucuses she said she was happy "to be in on" the reform whereby chairmen were elected, that she knew she was "for" that reform. But that she didn't know how to vote on individual

chairmen. I asked her who she talked to on these matters and she mentioned, in order, Bob Eckhardt "whom I trust and with whom I almost always agree," Tip O'Neil, and Wilbur Mills. The list was very different from Gerry Studds. And it's clear she's walking into the whole thing with much different view. Gerry saw her as more "cautious" too.

use 95  
committees?

"There was one very revealing vote in the DSG. They voted against having a freshman on the DSG executive committee. These great opponents of the seniority rule, these great advocates of opening up the system wouldn't let one freshman sit on their executive committee. I thought that was very revealing. It all depends on where you sit. One of the members called me afterward to explain his vote! He assured me that he had nothing against freshmen, and he went on and on with all of his reasons. I said, you don't need to explain to me. I know there are always "reasons".

Re DSG. "I haven't paid my dues yet. I'm going to go to a few more of their meetings and see whether it's the kind of a group I want to be connected with. Until then I'm withholding my dues." Very cautious.

"And the black caucus is just as bad. Long meetings; and they've decided they don't want a freshman as one of their officers. They feel we should wait and learn our way around. Not one of the three of us is considered qualified."

Re Texas delegation. "We meet for lunch once a week and I've enjoyed that very much. Anything they think I might want they are only too happy to do. One of the members, Ray Roberts, said to me that it was the best thing that had happened to the Texas delegation since he'd been there. Since you've come, he said, we are looked upon very differently, we are held in much higher regard. So I feel that I'm a helping hand in this delegation. The only one I don't have rapport with is O. C. Fisher--he's sour. Some people are just sour and he's one of them...(George Mahon?) I like him. He's nice."

Campaign? "There was no campaign. I spent \$150--fifty dollars for posters and \$100 for refreshments. I went wherever I was asked. And I went whenever I knew my opponent would be there because I thought I would stand to benefit by the contrast. But nothing happened. Nobody was interested. Everyone thought I had been elected. I had to identify myself as a candidate."

What's your relationship with Curtis Graves--has he come to rally around. "I have no relationship with Curtis Graves. I've had absolutely nothing to do with him since the primary. I wouldn't go to him. He would never come to me. And I wouldn't want him to rally round. I wouldn't trust him if he came to me to rally round. I like it the way it is. I understand he's working up here at OEO. But I don't want to have anything to do with him. He's a non-being--just a something out there as far as I'm concerned." She showed certain amount of animosity toward him I thought--but very controlled animosity.

"So far I've made it back to Houston every other week. And I intend to keep that up. Some congressmen get up here and haven't the slightest idea what's going on at home. They may get reelected, but they become permanent residents of Washington, D. C. I don't ~~every~~ want that to happen to me. I'm too important to the people of my district to come up here and stay. I want to go back and let them see me. So I'm keeping the Lyons Avenue office open, in addition to the federal building. A lot of people still call <sup>the</sup> Lyons Avenue <sup>office</sup>. Last weekend I spent half the time at the Federal Building and half the time at Lyons Avenue."

*Lestine* works half time at Lyons Avenue and half time at Federal Building. And then there's full time secretary at Federal Building.

How did she pick office staff. Did she want people from district. "I wanted people who knew their way around here. It's bad enough having a Congresswoman who doesn't know her way around without having a whole lot of other Texans trying to find their way around. I'm the freshman in the office." No sense that she has to represent the district with people in Washington.

Mark Talisman, *Vanik's* guy put her in touch with people for office staff and then she went to Bill Clay's assistant. "Bill Clay is a good congressman and he has the kind of administrative assistant I want. So I asked him to help. I thought that anyone Clay's AA thought was good would be just what I wanted." Got Andy Jacob's old AA that way.

"I had thousands of applications. That's an exaggeration. I had 300 or 400 applications. I came up to Vanik's office at Thanksgiving, set up shop there, interviewed and before I left I had most of my staff. And they clicked." Got one from Phil Buxton.

Said the Harvard seminar gave her "confidence" that she could handle the job. "A nice transition" but she didn't really have the time. "I was commuting between Texas and Washington and Boston. I really couldn't afford the time. So I cut off one week. Yvonne Burke cut off two weeks. Bill Cohen and Alan Steelman stayed the full four weeks."

W. J. B. Dorn

While I was there ~~W. T. B. Doris~~ called and wanted her to speak to South Carolina Teachers' Association. When her office put him on, she said "Congressman who?" and wrinkled up her face. Then as he talked she reached for her handbook to see who he was. About all she said to him was "Well, I'll let you work on me a little." Then when she put the phone down, she fumbled for his name again...and said "I know he's from South Carolina (drawl)." "I never will remember the names of all these guys; but William Jennings Bryan Dorn, I'll probably remember that. I suppose if I can carry a little light to South Carolina, I ought to go, don't you?"

I asked for overall impression of place--Studds having been very free with his. "I'll save my overall impressions till later. I haven't been here long enough, and we haven't gotten into the substance of things yet."