

## From One Texan To Another

Remarks by Francis C. Turner, Director of Public Roads, Federal Highway Administration, U. S. Department of Transportation, at the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration of the Texas State Highway Department, Municipal Auditorium, Austin, Texas, September 26, 1967.

Governor Connally, Governor Shivers, Members of the Fiftieth Anniversary Committee and Distinguished Guests:

This is one of the most pleasant assignments to come my way in more than 38 years of service with the Federal government because it has given me the opportunity to return to my native State to add a few words of sincere tribute to the great Texas State Highway Department and to the man who -- over a period of four decades -- has contributed so much to its greatness.

These few words are on behalf of Secretary of Transportation Alan S. Boyd, Federal Highway Administrator Lowell K. Bridwell, and -- most of all -- on behalf of myself. For it has been my privilege to work closely with your Highway Department and to enjoy the friendship and counsel of Dewitt Greer for a good many years. I am acquainted at first hand with Texas highway progress for I've seen its entire 50-year history unfold, from the deep black land dirt roads of the World War I days to its present excellence.

There is very little I can add to what has already been said or will be said about Dewitt Greer. He has received just about every honor available to a highway engineer and, in the words of one of his friends, "there's nothing left for him now but canonization."

He has excelled at everything he tackled, whether it was playing the trombone, building a great highway network, heading the American Association of State Highway Officials - or needling the Bureau of Public Roads. He has been especially expert at this latter activity.

Some of you may not know that Dewitt's first State job was as Chief Engineer of the Texas Park System. If pressed, he will tell you, incidentally, that he was the Park System's only engineer at the time. When he cracked the whip, he jumped, and thus he acquired the habit of command at an early age.

This habit of command has remained with him throughout a distinguished career, but it has never overwhelmed him. In fact his modesty and self-effacement are legendary in the highway field where these qualities are not always in surplus supply. But his shyness is disarming; it masks a scalpel wit and a steel-trap mind.

Dewitt Greer's service to Texas and to the Nation spans the most productive era of the Federal-aid highway program which, under the cooperative partnership between the States and the Bureau of Public Roads, has given the United States the greatest highway network in the world. When he joined the Department in 1927, the Nation's entire highway program was rocking along with something like \$100 million a year in Federal funds.

Today the annual Federal share of the program amounts to about \$4.4 billion. And we have progressed from merely paving dirt and gravel main rural roads to providing whole new networks such as the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. Moreover, we now utilize highways to perform many other useful social functions and to enhance many human values above and beyond their basic purpose of moving people and goods.

This has all been made possible by the Federal-State partnership, an intergovernmental relationship that is probably unique in durability and general harmony, at least in the essentials. I would like to quote an eminent man on this point:

"For the greatest portion of the last half-century the Federal Government and the State highway departments have cooperated in building a highway system unparalleled in history. We would like to credit this successful partnership to the fact that project control of the Federal-aid highway program has been kept close to the people -- where it is the most responsive to need and public demand."

That quotation is from Dewitt C. Greer and let me say that the Bureau of Public Roads goes along with it all the way.

I have spoken more about Dewitt Greer than the Texas State highway department because for the past 27 years the two have been almost synonymous and the monuments to both are all around us. Something like two-thirds of the Texas road network has come into being under his stewardship. But time does march on, and while Dewitt is stepping out on December 31, the Texas Highway Department will go on for another 50 years and many more, God willing.

Under the controlling Federal highway legislation, each State is expressly required to have a highway department organized and equipped to discharge its duties to the satisfaction of the Federal government.

There has never been even the slightest question on that score as far as Texas is concerned, nor is there likely ever to be one, if you continue in the tradition of your retiring Chief Engineer.

In any case, Dewitt, I want to convey my personal thanks and good wishes, as well as those of your many friends in the Bureau of Public Roads and elsewhere in the Federal government on this occasion, and to salute both you and the Texas Highway Department on this milestone.

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Texas and the Nation owe you both a tremendous debt of gratitude. The Bureau of Public Roads wishes for you continuing success and honor, and as a Texan, I'm proud to be able to bring this greeting to a fellow Aggie and a true Texan.