

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION MORTIMER DOWNEY
DEDICATION OF CHURCH PARK WILDFLOWER GARDEN
STONEWALL, TEXAS
AUGUST 27, 1997

[You will emcee the event. Speaking will be Bill Burnett of the Texas DOT, Senator Charles Robb, Secretary Slater, and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson. Seating will be in a semicircle behind a podium, with the garden as a backdrop.]

Good morning. I'm Deputy Secretary of Transportation Mortimer Downey. Alexander Hamilton once said that "a garden is a very usual refuge of a disappointed politician." Well, Mr. Hamilton may have been a distinguished New Yorker and the founder of the United States Coast Guard -- but I think he got that one wrong.

Today we're here to dedicate this new native wildflower garden in honor of Mrs. Lyndon Johnson and her longtime support of America's efforts to beautify our highways.

Joining us this morning are Mrs. Johnson -- Senator Charles Robb -- Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater -- and Bill Burnett, Executive Director of the Texas Department of Transportation.

Before we begin this morning's program, I'd like to acknowledge the members of Mrs. Johnson's family who are with us today: her daughter, Linda -- Linda's husband, Senator Robb -- and their daughters Catherine and Jennifer...

...Mrs. Johnson's daughter Luci -- Luci's husband, Ian Turpin -- their daughter, Nicole -- Nicole's husband, Brent Cobert, and their son John. *SM*

...Mrs. Johnson's grandson, Lyndon Nugent, his wife, Nicole Nugent, and their daughter, Tatum.

Thank you all for joining us this morning.

I also want to thank everyone who helped to make today's event possible, especially Bill Garbade and Kerry Blackmon of the Texas Department of Transportation and Dan Reagan, Dave Gibbs, and Bonnie Harper-Lore of the Federal Highway Administration.

I'd like to open by reading a message from President Clinton:

"Warm greetings to everyone gathered to celebrate the dedication of the native plant and wildflower garden honoring Mrs. Lyndon Johnson.

"As the poet Francis Bacon wrote, flowers and gardens are 'the purest of human pleasures,' and Mrs. Johnson has helped to bring those pleasures to the tens of millions of Americans who travel the nation's highways each day.

“Mrs. Johnson was among the first to recognize that how we build and maintain America’s roads demonstrates our respect and appreciation for the beautiful and spacious land we have inherited.

“The effort she launched a generation ago to beautify our highways has reaped benefits in all 50 states, and helped to inspire our nation’s commitment to environmental protection.

“Hillary and I congratulate Mrs. Johnson on today’s recognition of her role in the great national effort to cherish and conserve America’s environment, and look forward to her continuing to provide inspiration and guidance to the highway beautification movement. Signed, Bill Clinton.”

Speaking for myself, I’m very proud to be here. 30 years ago, I was an officer in the Coast Guard Reserve when President Johnson created the Department of Transportation.

Those of us who are among the Department’s original employees look upon President Johnson as the father of the federal commitment to transportation, much as Mrs. Johnson’s pioneering efforts in highway beautification helped to inspire the national commitment to the environment.

I'm glad that -- in the year we celebrate the 30th anniversary of President Johnson's creation of the Department of Transportation -- we also can honor Mrs. Johnson's lifelong support of highway beautification and the preservation of America's natural environment.

Now, I'd like to introduce our first speaker, Bill Burnett of the Texas Department of Transportation. His agency administers this state's highway beautification efforts, carrying on a wildflower planting program whose roots date back to 1929.

[You will return to your seat. After Bill Burnett speaks, you will return to the podium to introduce Senator Robb.]

Thank you, Executive Director Burnett. Our next speaker is Senator Charles Robb of Virginia, Mrs. Johnson's son-in-law, who has sustained President Johnson's legacy of a strong national commitment to transportation.

[Senator Robb will introduce Secretary Slater, who will introduce Mrs. Johnson. After Mrs. Johnson finishes her remarks you will return to the podium.]

Thank you, Mrs. Johnson. Now, I'd like to ask Mrs. Johnson -- Senator Robb -- Secretary Slater -- and Executive Director Burnett to step over to the dedication plaque...

[Party steps over to the plaque for an unveiling photo op. After photos, you will return to the podium alone.]

On behalf of Mrs. Johnson -- Senator Robb -- Executive Director Burnett -- and Secretary Slater, I'd like to thank you all for coming. Now, I invite you all to visit the new Texas wildflower garden honoring Mrs. Johnson...

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