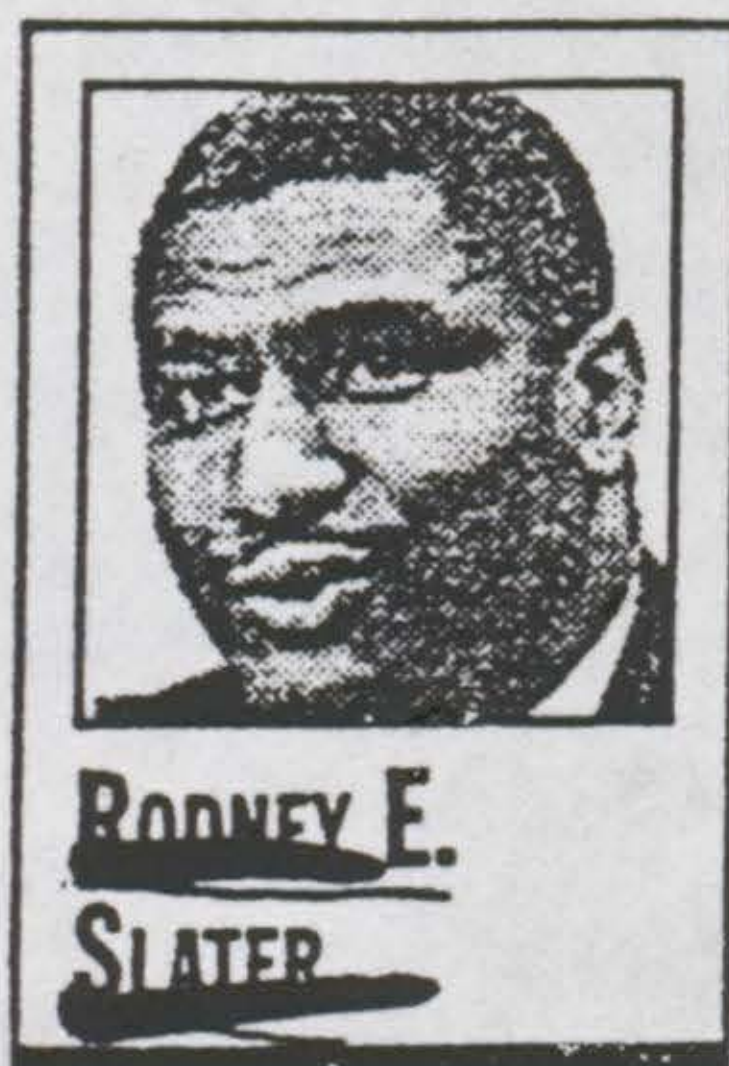


A living tribute to Lady Bird's legacy

Today, America will celebrate the late President Lyndon Johnson's birthday by giving Lady Bird Johnson the same present she has given the nation for three decades: wildflowers.



**PUBLIC
FORUM**

At a rest area on U.S. 290 near the LBJ Ranch in Stonewall, the Texas Department of Transportation has planted a bed of 25 species of native Texas perennial wildflowers in honor of the former First Lady.

In dedicating the garden to her this morning, I remind us of what President Johnson said three decades ago, when he signed the Highway Beautification Act, which passed Congress as much because of Mrs. Johnson's efforts as his own: "Beauty belongs to all the people."

That law provided limits on billboards and junkyards along major highways and money to landscape them. President Johnson would be proud to know that since that law came to be, the nation that builds the most roads also has the most aesthetic roads.

Every day 5,000 cars will pass the newest wildflower plot we dedicate. Every year, 60,000 pounds of wildflower seeds are added to Texas roads, so millions can enjoy their beauty.

From coast to coast, every state in the union now plants wildflowers, as Mrs.

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Johnson's love for flowers has become America's.

It was not always the case. President Johnson knew his bill passed because Congress was reluctant to say "no" to a president's wife.

What would he think today? He would be happy to know that members of Congress now fight to have scenic byways and All-American roads designated in their districts and states.

One reason they do so — and President Johnson knew this would happen — is that the kaleidoscope of colors that defines the countryside brings tourists, who spend money and create jobs, especially in rural America.

But what would surprise even him is that Congress is now considering a proposal by President Clinton to increase spending by 35 percent over six years for programs to beautify and enhance our

roads — and recreational enjoyment. That is all the more remarkable, considering the President and Congress are balancing a budget — the first time since Johnson was president that has happened.

It is all because 30 years ago Mrs. Johnson did the most important thing a first lady could do: She gave America the faith

that America is beautiful.

She taught America to dream again and to understand the obligation that we must leave the country looking as good, if not better, than we found it. She understood that all journeys should be as pleasing or desirable as the destination.

All first ladies who follow Mrs. Johnson occupy a position that she changed forever, a position where one person can make a difference to the heart and soul and face of America.

She helped America by reminding us of the simplest of lessons: "Where there are flowers, there is hope."

We have engraved those words on the plaque in the middle of Texas' newest bed of wildflowers. For the greatest gift we can give her would be for that lesson to be learned by all generations to come.

Slater is U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

FROM PRECEDING PAGE

Austin.

Slater, however, said Austin is not alone in its transportation needs.

"Your experiences here in Austin are much like experiences across the country, where you have many regions that are experiencing significant growth and development," he said.

Although the Clinton administration's proposal includes 11 percent more money for transportation than previously authorized, competition will be stiff. Communities across the country are making their pitches for federal money to pay for local rail and highway projects.

Congress is preparing to debate the proposals. A decision on who gets how much may be as far off as Thanksgiving.

At Wednesday's forum at the University of Texas, transportation experts and industry leaders said making it easy for people and goods to get around makes the economic world go around.

Slater conceded earlier in the day that mobility is getting harder in Austin. The city's major interstate is choked with congestion, and more trade-related traffic is on the way. I-35, which stretches from Mexico to Canada, is most congested between San Antonio and Austin.

Slater said the proposed new highway, along with local and regional rail, could be a good approach to relieving congestion. A major point in its favor? The regional pitch has been espoused by community and business leaders from San Antonio to Georgetown and beyond. The proposal crosses governmental lines and types of transportation, Slater said, and that's likely to improve the region's chances of getting federal money.

"I think it's always good to look at things with a broader perspective," he said. "So looking beyond a given city, a given country, to think about things in more of a regional and international perspective -- that's very important."

Ross Milloy, president of the Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council, which is helping to promote the regional transportation package, said Slater's visit and the forum were encouraging.

"We're exactly what they're looking for. I think it looks good for us."

HIGHER EDUCATION NOTES

Baylor University unveils its new, less perky bear

Forget cute and cuddly. The Baylor bear is bad.

Baylor University is unveiling a new logo Thursday that features a newly designed growling bear. It is better than the bear logos of the past, said Stan Madden, vice president for university marketing.

"There will be no more perky little bears," Madden said. "Now, we're going to have a wild bear."

Why? "We feel like we need a contemporary logo to match our initiatives in athletics," Madden explained. "Two, we need our wearables to capture the Baylor spirit better. Third is the financial consideration. We need a logo that is appealing to the marketplace."

Student welcome party planned

The University of Texas has a big welcome party planned for freshmen and other new students Tuesday night: a laser show illuminating the UT Tower, music by the Longhorn band, an appearance by mascot Bevo and music by local artists.

The action starts at 8 p.m. on the campus' South Mall. The laser effects will be from about 9:15 until 10 or 10:30.

School starts Wednesday.

Transportation issues talk planned

Transportation experts, including U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater, will hold a policy forum Wednesday to discuss transportation issues in the new millennium.

The free public event, from 2:30 to 5 p.m., will be held at the LBJ Library auditorium in honor of Johnson's birthday and the 30th anniversary of his signing legislation creating the U.S. Transportation Department.

Baylor, UT law schools in top 20

The law schools of Baylor University and UT were ranked among the top 20 law schools nationally by The National Jurist, a legal publication.

Tech students place in competition

Lee Edward Brown, a student from Texas State Technical College at Waco, placed second in the nation in the Skills USA Championship sponsored by the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America.

Brown won the silver medal for his computer maintenance and repair demonstration at the Kansas City, Mo., competition.

Several of the college's students from Austin also won awards: Mark Chapla, ninth place in diesel mechanics; David Staba, 10th in automotive work; and James Shelton, 27th in technical drafting.

Sharpe named educator of the year

Ed Sharpe, UT's vice president for administration and public affairs, has been named Educator of the Year by INROADS/Central Texas Inc., part of a national organization that places minority college students in internships.

The award is given to the person or institution that has demonstrated a deep commitment to helping prepare minorities for jobs and community leadership.

Still time to add evening courses

It's not too late to register for evening courses at UT. New classes have been added this year, especially in engineering, computer science, Asian languages, creative writing and musical performance.

Late registration is available through Friday. Call 471-2900 or see www.utexas.edu/dce/univext.

Program gets software donation

National Instruments is donating a \$2,900 software package to students who took part in the UT College of Engineering's Laptops for Learning program. The software will give the students access to industry-standard technology.

The college is promoting the use of laptop computers by offering discounts and by wiring study halls and classrooms for Internet access. The hardware and software will be distributed at the Erwin Center from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Engineering Dean Ben Streetman and National Instruments President James Truchard, a UT alumnus, will be there from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.