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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
LBJ MEMORIAL GROVE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY
LBJ MEMORIAL GROVE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

It is an honor for me to participate in this ceremony, not only as President, but as an old friend of the man whose memory we honor today.

But before talking about the man, there are a few words, I want to say about our former First Lady, whom I am very happy to see here.

No one has done more to beautify America than Lady Bird Johnson. And the countless trees and flowers that were planted across the country, thanks to her efforts, are a true reflection of a warm, wonderful person who was a great First Lady.

Lyndon Baines Johnson -- long before he entered the White House -- had already made his mark on history as a great member of the House and leader of the Senate.

As Senate Minority and Majority Leader during President Eisenhower's years in office, whenever America's welfare was concerned, he always put country before party.

His cooperation with the Eisenhower Administration on matters of foreign policy and national security was outstanding -- a model of bipartisan statesmanship.

He was a big man, a strong man. And it was that strength, coupled with his faith in himself -- and his even stronger faith in America -- that saw him through his Presidency.

As much as Lyndon Johnson loved his native State of Texas and his ranch along the Pedernales, I think part of his heart and a lot of his indomitable spirit never left Washington.

Now it has a home, in this beautiful setting overlooking Washington across the Potomac. From this peaceful, inspiring location, we can see the great dome of the Capitol, where Lyndon Johnson first rose to prominence.

We can see the Jefferson Memorial -- monument to the great author of the Declaration of American Independence.

We can see the Lincoln Memorial -- the shrine of a man whose vision of freedom and human dignity for all was so much a part of Lyndon Johnson's own life.

One of the great heroes of the War Between the States, General "Stonewall" Jackson, expressed the feeling of this moment and this place in his simple, poignant last words, uttered more than a hundred years ago.

"Let us cross over the river," he said, "and rest under the trees."

(MORE)

Lyndon Johnson has crossed over the river from the busy, demanding Washington where he gave his all. And a part of his spirit will always rest here, shaded by tall trees to match his stature.

For those of us who knew him personally, this will always be a very special place. But for millions of Americans of this and future generations, who never knew him in life, this grove will also be a place of pleasure, rest and comfort -- a place where they can pay silent respect to the memory of a President who served his country and his countrymen well.

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