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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
LBJ MEMORIAL GROVE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

LBJ MEMORIAL GROVE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

12:24 P.M. EDT

Mrs. Johnson, the Johnson family, Mr. Speaker, my former colleagues in the Congress, distinguished public officials, friends of Lyndon Johnson.

It is really a great honor and privilege for me to participate in this auspicious occasion today, to participate not only as President, but as an old friend of the man we honor here on this occasion.

I think it is appropriate, before we talk about the man, to say a few words about another person. And I would like to make a comment or two, if I might, about our former First Lady who I am delighted to see here on this occasion.

I don't think there is an American in our society today, or maybe historically, who has done more to beautify America than Lady Bird Johnson. We all know there are countless trees, literally millions and millions of flowers that were planted across this land, thanks to her efforts, and are a true reflection, as I know her and many of you know her infinitely better than I, a true reflection of her warm, wonderful personality, who was a very great First Lady.

Lyndon Baines Johnson, long before he entered the White House, had already made his mark, his mark on history as a very great Member of the House of Representatives, subsequently the United States Senate, not only a Member but an inspirational and effective leader of the United States Senate.

As Senate Minority and subsequently as Senate Majority Leader, during former President Eisenhower's Administration, whenever America's welfare was concerned, Lyndon B. Johnson always put his country above his party.

His cooperation with the Eisenhower Administration -- and I knew it somewhat intimately on matters of foreign policy and national security -- was an outstanding one. It seems to me as I recollect -- and I sought to last night -- it was a model of bipartisan statesmanship.

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But aside from his skill and his achievements in the field of the Congress and his relationship to a President, we all knew Lyndon Johnson as 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 through him his Presidency.

Now, as much as Lyndon Johnson loved his great State of Texas, Mr. Governor, and as much as he loved that great land, his ranch along the Pedernales, I think part of his heart and a part of his spirit, that indomitable spirit never left Washington, D. C.

Now it has a home in this beautiful setting overlooking Washington adjoining the Potomac. From this peaceful, inspiring location, we can see the great dome of the Capitol where Lyndon Johnson rose to his first prominence. We can see the Jefferson Memorial, a monument to the great author of the Declaration of Independence. We can see the Lincoln Memorial, the shrine of a man of vision, a vision of freedom, a vision of human dignity for all of this was an integral part of Lyndon Banes Johnson's own life.

One of the great heroes of the War between the States, General Stonewall Jackson expressed the feeling, I think, of this very moment. He expressed this feeling that we can use in this very occasion, and it was something like a hundred years ago. And let me quote, "Let us cross over the river," Stonewall Jackson said, "and rest under the trees."

For those of us who knew the former President personally, this will always be a very special place, but for millions of Americans of this and, more importantly, future generations who never knew him in life, this grove will be a grove, a place of pleasure, rest, as well as comfort. A place where they can pay an appropriate silent tribute, a silent respect to the memory of a President who served his country and his countrymen very well.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 12:30 P.M. EDT)