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FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY ⁶⁵
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REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
DEDICATION OF SAM RAYBURN STATUE
RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, friends and admirers of Sam Rayburn:

The first moment Sam Rayburn set eyes on this hill was a day in March of 1913. He arrived from Texas' Old Fourth District and stepped out of Union Station to see before him the breath-taking beauty of the glistening white Capitol dome.

It was love at first sight.

Often, afterward he would recall the moment and envy others who experienced this sight for the first time.

The freshman congressman checked in, received his office space, and carefully clipped from a country newspaper back home an editorial boldly predicting: "Sam Rayburn has served this district well in the Texas legislature. In the halls of Congress, he will go far."

Two days later, he sat with other new members of the House to hear the inaugural address of the college president who had entered politics and been elected president.

The words of Woodrow Wilson never left him: "Here, muster, not the forces of party but of humanity!" Often, he recalled this address as one of the high points of his life.

It is hard for us to remember now that Sam Rayburn was ever a freshman member of the House of Representatives. For so many freshmen members -- over almost half a century -- became alumni of the Sam Rayburn school. He left his mark on them all.

Two months after his death in 1961, one of these freshmen was asked to give a tribute at a dinner in Washington.

I would like to read from that tribute now, and in doing so, to dedicate this statue to all new members of the 89th Congress and all future Congresses in hopes that -- like Sam Rayburn -- they will labor under the great white dome of the Capitol with the same faith in the people and the same nobility of purpose.

The tribute was given by my husband.

"Everyone who knew Sam Rayburn cherishes the moments they shared with him, whether it was in the hushed silence of the House before the tally of a vote is announced -- during the unvarnished talk of the Board of Education -- amidst the hubbub of a Democratic convention -- or on quiet walks around Texas' old fourth district to talk to the men and women of those flat black lands he loved so well.

"The House of Representatives was his great love. He was, at once, its master and its servant.

"There wasn't anyone in the United States who couldn't see the Speaker, if they were willing to sit a spell. To the dismay of his staff, he made his own appointments -- often on the back of an old envelope in his hip pocket. And he read his own mail.

"When someone writes me on tablet paper with a lead pencil, he once told me, 'I figure what he's writing me about is pretty important to him.'

"Authors for years to come will analyze this man who held sway over the House longer than any other mortal. They can turn to him for their text.

"You can't really say how you lead. You feel your way, receptive to those rolling waves of sentiment. And if a man can't see and hear and feel, why then, of course, he's lost.'

"Speaker Rayburn could see and hear and feel. He was part of this good earth.

"He furnished his own political party some of its most straightforward thinking and talking:

" 'I'm a Democrat without suffix, prefix or apology.'

"He was younger than any of us. There was one thing he disliked more than old fogies, and as he put it, that was 'young fogies.'

"The last speech he made to the House came the day he doubled Henry Clay's record as Speaker. He stood in that familiar well and said: 'I have so much faith in human beings. I know that people are good folks.'

"In a reflective mood one evening with a group of friends, he put it so well. He recalled how good people had always been to him. He talked of Flag Springs, the little town where he had gone to the one-room school.

" 'All of us are just a little way from Flag Springs,' he said, adding, 'You know, I just missed being a tenant farmer by a gnat's heel. '

"All of us are just a little way from Flag Springs. "

That is the lesson this solid giant left here on the hill he loved.

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