

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY
FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 1966 -- 7:30 P.M. CST

REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
PASEO DEL RIO LIGHTING CEREMONIES
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Mayor McAllister, Mrs. Cockrell, members of the City Council and my friends of San Antonio:

The President asked me to bring you his very special greetings tonight.

No one comes to this picturesque city without a deep sense of history. As a matter of fact, some of our own personal history occurred here. We were married in St. Marks Church...and through the years we frequently came here for various conferences.

Indeed, this very spot at La Villita stirs in us so many memories of great dreams over the coffee cup between my husband and Maury Maverick -- dreams that took shape in the restoration of this early Spanish village.

No one is prouder than the President that some of those NYA boys who helped build La Villita are now leading artisans in a craft that they learned here. I'm quite sure that the happy experience which that tall, young NYA director had at La Villita paved the way for a President's action in creating a Job Corps.

"What is past is prologue" not only in the lives of all of us, but in the life of a city.

As we gaze out over this gently moving water, it is as though a mirror is revealing the glorious heritage of San Antonio. Water is life -- and so we are told the first Spanish explorers found an Indian village here in 1691. They named it San Antonio, as it was the feast day of St. Anthony of Padua and what a glorious history was to follow along these sloping river banks.

On one side of the river not far from where we stand tonight, the Alamo, which has a hold on the hearts of all who love freedom, was established in 1718.

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The Canary Island colonists came in 1731, seeking a new life. Those 15 families -- some of whose descendants are here tonight -- established the first civil settlement in Texas.

From the beginning, this river has been the lifeline of San Antonio. The waves of settlement brought colonizers, homesteaders, swashbuckling romanticists from Tennessee and Virginia, frontiersmen, a great blend of this country.

The roll call of heroes at the Alamo itself shows a great variety of heritages -- English, Scotch, Danish, German including eight Spanish surnames.

But tonight -- our task is not to look back so much as to dedicate what alert, progressive citizens have done for the future -- what you have done -- in using this great natural asset. This river -- is a great source of pride, not only to yourselves, and your visitors, but a source of inspiration to cities everywhere now seeking ways to salvage themselves.

I have traveled through a great many cities in recent months and found them coping with what you have overcome. Urban sprawl has withered away their centers and they are struggling to find a way to breathe life into center-city.

Here is a great example of what can be done. It says to every city -- look around and find the individual charm, the bounty of nature, the heritage of the past with which to rebuild.

The City Council of San Antonio is to be commended for its foresight in saving this God-given inheritance for future generations by creating the protective River Walk ordinances. Your River Walk Commission has a privileged duty to preserve the priceless heritage of this unique river.

The plans to extend the river into the new HemisFair grounds can strengthen and heighten the cultural advantages to this City. I am told future plans call for extending this lighting project all along the river even beyond the Ursuline Convent property which your Conservation Society has recently secured for future generations.

All over the country there is an awakening to the preservation of nature's endowments. As the lights go on tonight, I look out over the river with its grassy banks and cottonwoods, and cypress, and pecan and willow, and Retama, and all I can say is "This is America the Beautiful."

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