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Office of the Press Secretary  
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

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REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON AT THE  
DEDICATION OF PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

Friends:

I'm delighted to be here on this important day in the life of Padre Island!

Its dedication into the National Park system means it will forever belong to the people -- to generations of campers, scout troops, fishermen, bird-watchers, and sunbathers -- to travelers from near and far.

I'm particularly glad that I could bring some forty journalists from Europe who are here on a "Discover America" trip, for I wanted them to see this island of white sand dunes and our plans to keep it very much as it is now.

This is the kind of occasion which Secretary of Interior Udall and Park Director George Hartzog particularly enjoy, for it gives us another excuse to point out the glories of the park system. There are now six national seashores like Padre on all three of the coasts of the United States. There are more than 250 national parks and historic areas.

In our varied America of 50 States, there are places for raft rides, pack trips, ski-ing, boating, hiking, and they are available to pocketbooks of all sizes. In the last year, one hundred and thirty-three million visitors used these national treasures!

What does it take to make a national park? To create a national seashore?

There are many here on this stand, and in this audience who supplied the answer to that.

It takes a dream....as it did with Judge Oscar Dancy some thirty years ago.

It takes endless hours of hard work by the "believers" -- people up and down the island span; not only people, but newspapers like the Corpus Christi Caller-Times who helped educate the readers to the advantages, and won an award for it.

It takes surveys, and then it takes legislation -- the tedious process of seeing-it-through the subcommittees and committees of the Senate and the House. There have been no more dedicated overseers than Senator Ralph Yarborough and Representative John Young, Congressman de la Garza whose district now includes so much of the island is its constant booster.

And -- if I may be forgiven for pointing it out -- it also takes a President who recognizes the value of this kind of project. In his years in the White House, the President has secured 35 new additions to the National Park System. They comprise over one million acres -- the equivalent of Grand Canyon National Park and Grand Teton combined. There are now 163 linear miles of shoreline newly preserved, at Cape Lookout, Assateague, Fire Island, Pictured Rocks, and Indiana Dunes.

The President calls them a "necklace of national seashores," and he knows well the thirst that is still growing for wild places and outdoor recreation. A few days ago, he launched a program to identify and save other wild islands along the coast. "They represent some of the most magnificent, unspoiled beauty spots that are left in our continent," he said. "We must get an island conservation and recreation program going soon."

I would like to think that one of the reasons he is such a strong advocate is partly because of a lovely holiday we had some 20 years ago along these ribbons of sand in the Texas Gulf Coast.

My mind turns back to it today, for we walked the beach and felt that sense of timelessness that envelops one like the rolling waves.

There is always an ineffable tranquility in which you are face to face with sea and sky -- forces which put one's own problems into perspective. Patience, faith, openness is what the sea teaches.

There was for me also the wonderful sense of discovery of coming upon a treasure in the sand -- an old blue glass ball that came to these shores, by what paths and currents I know not, from some far away country -- perhaps from some Portuguese fisherman's net. It has been my talisman ever since. Each time I see it on the shelf, it invites me back.

It takes not only the dreamers, the believers, the legislators, it will also take the keepers -- the watchful stewards -- for a national belonging such as Padre Island

So I would urge those who are charged with the facilities that will doubtless be built, not only within the seashore areas, but on its commercial fringes, to make man's structures in harmony with nature's.

The time and thought invested in such details as where the roads will thread the island, where buildings will be in harmony of terrain, how the parking lots can be screened, how signs and markers can be tasteful will reap dividends over the decades.

It has been said that wilderness is the miracle that man can tear apart but cannot reassemble. So I hope very much that these white sands, this dazzling dome of sky will be here, in all their freshness to be savored year after year.

For here, facing the sea, touching the spiral of a perfect shell, it is hard to believe the crowding and tensions of an urbanized society. Every man has a thirst to leave his footprints on an untrammelled sand. I hope it will always be so, and we will always provide it. America does not have the works of ancient civilizations to show the world, but we do have priceless scenery, which this decade has renewed dedication to value and preserve and use.

Padre Island is old by our standards. Colonel Diego Ortiz Parilla and his soldiers were patrolling the trackless white sands of Padre at the same time George Washington and his men were enduring a forbidding winter at Valley Forge.

The padre for which this land was named was a Portugese priest, Nicholas Balli, who raised horses and cattle. He was here long before the celebrated wagons of Tennessee pioneers came rolling across the Brazos to the foundations of the Republic of Texas.

Legends of early Indians, of shipwrecked Spanish galleons, are part of Padre Island, and I hope, Mr. Hartzog, there will be occasions when some gifted story-teller could bring them to life as part of the regular program here.

For at every beach, there are new shells to find, new dunes to paint.

And I believe you who hold Padre Island in your hand will feel very much as the survey party of Colonel Parilla did in 1766. Two hundred years ago, they paid the highest tribute this island could receive:

"Her treasure is the gold of her sun, the silver of her moonlight, and the sapphire of her pearl-crested waves.

"This treasure requires no iron strong box. It is safe from the greedy hands of man -- for it belongs to God."

So, today, I dedicate it to the people who will come here to enjoy God's bounty. I dedicate it with the hope that we -- as its stewards -- will be worthy of the trust.

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