

Aug. 29 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

Remarks at the Dedication of the Mission San Jose Grist Mill in
San Antonio
August 29, 2001

Thank you very much. *Sientese*. Looks like the Federal drought relief program is working. [Laughter] It's wonderful to be here in San Antonio. I want to thank Boo and Nancy for inviting Laura and me to come down for this event. I want the people of the country to be able to get a sense for the majesty and history and tradition of one of the Nation's greatest cities, and that's San Antonio, Texas. We're honored to be here to celebrate the opening of the grist mill at the Mission San Jose.

Mr. Mayor, thank you for your hospitality. I appreciate you riding over from the convention center in the limousine, bringing me up to date on the good works that the people of San Antonio. I'm impressed, and obviously the voters of San Antonio were impressed, too, when they elected this young leader to a high office.

I'm honored to be traveling today with the National Parks Director, Fran Mainella, who I promoted—I pulled her out of the clutches of the Governor of Florida. [Laughter] She's going to do a fabulous job for the parks system in America. She's a great leader. I don't know if you've had a chance to meet Fran yet, but Fran, why don't you stand up. [Applause]

Steve Whitesell is—represents thousands of hard-working Government employees, who work hard to make our Park System the best in the world. Steve's assigned here in San Antonio. Fran tells me he's doing a heck of a good job. If she says he's doing a good job, that's good enough for me. But Steve, I want to thank you, and on behalf of the—literally hundreds of people that work hard to make our Park System accessible and available for all Americans, thanks for what you do.

Archbishop Flores, it's great to see you, sir. Thank you very much. Again, the Loefflers and the Haussers and all of you

who are involved with this worthwhile project, I appreciate very much the chance to come and herald a couple of points.

One is that historic preservation is an important part of government, because it heralds our national heritage. It's important for people to know where we've come from, to understand where we're going. In order to understand Texas and San Antonio, it's important to understand the missions and the role they played in our State's history.

The missions not only were outposts of religion, which is an incredibly important part of our country; they were also the outposts of aid and comfort and help, which must always be a part of the fabric of America. I just went to the American Legion. I reminded people that the greatness of America is not in the halls of Government; it's in the hearts of our citizens. We're a compassionate Nation because we're compassionate people. And to me, the church and the mission represents that compassion. And we must preserve that which is a part of our national heritage. And so I want to thank the citizens of San Antonio for doing just that.

And the second thing to herald here today is the private-public partnership that exists with Los Compadres, who have raised over \$2.5 million to provide support for the Park System here in San Antonio, to preserve the unique legacy of the missions and what they meant to the people from all walks of life. And so I want to thank the good folks. Fran tells me that what she is attempting to do is to rally what they call friends groups, groups such as Los Compadres, all across the country, to say to people that have got a stake in the National Park System in their neighborhood, do something about it. Follow the example of Los Compadres. Raise money to support

the good people that are working to make the Park System the best it can possibly be.

So Laura and I are here to thank the citizens who understand the value of our heritage, understand the value of the mission system in San Antonio, and thank you for your generosity and vision and good work, not only on behalf of the people of Texas but on behalf of the millions of visitors who come to Texas to be able to understand what our State has been all about.

And finally, it's important to be here because it's important for America to know the American story has been written and spoken in different languages. That the unique thing about America is our ability to welcome people from different backgrounds into our Nation and to be able to assimilate around common values, values of family and faith, values of community and hard work. That's what America's really all about.

I'm getting ready to meet with Vicente Fox for my first state dinner next week. As you know, we've been in Crawford, Texas, on what they call a working vacation. [Laughter] Part of our working vacation has been to travel the Nation to talk about the values of the heartland. And one of the values of the heartland is family and faith and the willingness of people to help each other in need. And those values aren't just a part of one ethnic group in America. They're a part of every ethnic group in our country. And I can't wait to share my enthusiasm about our neighbors and our relations with Mexico with Vicente Fox. And these missions remind me about the important role that Mexico has played in the history, not only of Texas but our Nation.

And like the values of neighborliness, those values must extend beyond the Rio Bravo as well. It's important to be neighbor—friendly neighbors with people across the street. It's important to help a neighbor in need in America. But it's also important to live—understand we live in an inter-

national neighborhood. And Mexico is our neighbor, and we want Mexico to prosper. We want our neighbor to do well.

If you're in a neighborhood, don't you want all the neighborhoods—the neighbors to be successful? I do. And we want Mexico to be a successful country. And so we're—as we say in Texas, we're pulling for President Fox to succeed. We want the marketplace to take hold. We want people to find work close to home. But we understand that if you can make a living in America and you can't find a job in Mexico, family values don't stop at the southern border. People who share a desire to provide for their families, that exists all across the country and in our hemisphere. And so people are coming to work to provide food for their families. And that's why we want Mexico to succeed. It's in our national interest. It's in our national interest that relations are strong with our neighbor. Those are values that are important, not only at home but internationally. And so I look forward to sharing my enthusiasm about our relationship with our neighbor to our south.

These missions remind me of the visit this coming week. It's an important visit, because good foreign policy starts in your own neighborhood. And I'm pleased to report, we've got good foreign policy with our neighbor to the south. We've never had a better relationship, and we'll continue to work to make sure our relationship with our friends from Mexico are as strong as possible.

And the reason why it's important to preserve heritage is because it reminds us of the close link we've had with Mexico and the Hispanic culture for a long period of time. America is richer as a result of that culture.

I want to thank you all for giving us a chance to come. I'm looking forward to breaking the proverbial ribbon on the old grist mill. [Laughter] Again, I want to thank the Loefflers. I want to thank Boo. And I want to thank all the good citizens.

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“Thank you, Mr. President, for our tax refund.” [Laughter] Thank you for holding that sign. [Laughter] If you’re looking for something to do with your refund, you got a little extra money, give it to Los Compadres.

We’re sure glad to be back in Texas. Our batteries are charged, and Laura and I are looking forward to going back to work tomorrow, to the Nation’s Capital. But even though we’ve changed addresses, Texas will always be home.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:43 a.m. in front of Mission San José. In his remarks, he referred to Albert F. “Boo” Hausser, chairman, Los Compadres, and his wife, Meta; former Representative Tom Loeffler and his wife, Nancy; Mayor Edward D. Garza of San Antonio; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Stephen F. Whitesell, superintendent, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park; Archbishop Patrick F. Flores, Archdiocese of San Antonio; and President Vicente Fox of Mexico.

Remarks on the Last Flight of Air Force One Tail Number 27000 in Waco, Texas

August 29, 2001

Any Air Force plane carrying the President bears the name Air Force One. This plane, tail number 27000, wore the name of Air Force One for 444 missions and more than 1 million miles. Today this plane carried a President for the last time, and soon it will be taking its last flight. It will carry no more Presidents, but it will carry forever the spirit of American democracy.

Tail number 27000 entered the service of the United States in December 1972 and first served President Richard Nixon and then President Ford. It flew former President Carter and former President—Vice President Mondale to Germany to greet 52 Americans who had been held hostage in Iran. My father flew it frequently, but the President who used it the most was Ronald Reagan. It was from this plane that President Reagan disembarked in Berlin in 1987 and demanded, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.”

And none of those flights would have been possible without the skill and commitment of the air crews of old 27000. For almost three decades, the pilot and crew of tail number 27000 have performed flawlessly, for not only Presidents but Vice Presidents and Cabinet Secretaries and

Members of Congress. I’m delighted that former crew members can be with us today.

Ralph Albertazzie, President Nixon’s pilot, is here; Colonel Bob Ruddick, the pilot for President Ronald Reagan; Danny Barr, who flew my dad; Chief Master Sergeant Joe Chappell, he was the chief flight engineer who rode the plane on its original voyage from the Boeing factory to Andrews Air Force Base; Chief Master Sergeant Charles Palmer; Chief Master Sergeant Denny Stump; Chief Master Sergeant Kim Johnson; Chief Master Sergeant Tim Kerwin; Chief Master Sergeant John Haigh; and of course, the man who flies me, Colonel Mark Tillman.

Between you, you have served seven Presidents, and you have served your Nation well. Thanks to you, American history has been a little less turbulent than it might have been.

Tail number 27000 flew two Presidents back home from Washington to California. It carried Richard Nixon in 1974 and Ronald Reagan in 1989. And today it will follow its distinguished passengers to its own retirement in California. A new hangar will be built for 27000 at the Reagan Library