

Remarks of Jess Hay

Memorial Service for Janey Briscoe

Chamber, Texas House of Representatives, Austin, TX

2:00 p.m., Sunday, November 5, 2000

We gather today to commemorate

- a life of love
- a life of service
- a life of faith
- a life of dedication
 - to family
 - to children
 - to learning
 - and to redemptive outreach to those in need.

We gather to remember the life and contributions of Janey Slaughter Briscoe

- and to express our gratitude for all she did to make ours a better place
- and to enhance still further the rich heritage of Texas and its people.

Janey's abiding interests in children, in the liberal and fine arts, in education, in quality health care and in the cause of mental health

- appropriately led to her selection in 1981 to serve on the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System and later in 1996 to her designation as a distinguished alumnus of The University of Texas at Austin.

She loved The University and relished memories of her days there as a student, which were shared with the love of her life, Dolph Briscoe.

During her creative six years on the Board, Janey always was a warm and caring leader with a big heart.

Her primary focus always was on people, and she never lost sight of the fact that the central purpose of any institution of higher education was to prepare our young people for productive and contributing lives.

In this spirit, Janey was the Board's most consistent advocate of programs to expand access to the System's components

- to allow students recurring opportunities to prove themselves academically
- and to ensure that student concerns and problems carefully were considered by the Regents.

Concurrently, she was a strong supporter of the research dimension of each component's mission

- of sustained efforts to recruit and retain top faculties at each component
- and of allocating resources to ensure that our libraries and our teaching, laboratory and research equipment at each component were of the highest possible quality.

In short, Janey Briscoe was a Regent who understood deeply the importance to the State of Texas of developing and maintaining a first class system of higher education.

Through her participation as a member of the Board's Academic Affairs Committee and for four years as Chairman of its Health Affairs Committee, Janey contributed immeasurably to the enhancement of the System's outreach to more than 116,000 students,

- to the enrichment of its academic programs
- to the development of its faculties
- and, at our health institutions, to the delivery of first class clinical care to all who presented themselves for treatment
- regardless of race, creed or economic station.

Always mindful of the role of Regent as policy maker rather than micro-manager

- Janey formed a dynamic partnership with Dr. Charles Mullins
- the System's Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs.

Together they revitalized the System's critical and at the time endangered relationship with the Hermann Hospital Estate in Houston.

- In cooperation with three search committees, they brought new and effective leadership to our health units in Dallas, San Antonio and Galveston.

Together they took the lead in expanding the outreach of our medical units through:

- the transfer of the Texas Research Institute for the Mental Sciences to the Houston Health Science Center;
- the opening of the Texas Department of Corrections Hospital at Galveston;
- the definition of an effective operational plan for the Houston State Psychiatric Institute;
- the development of a new cooperative institute for Aids treatment and research;
- and finally through the launch of cooperative programs in biotechnology among our health institutions and private industry;
 - initiatives, incidentally, which continue to produce significant benefits throughout the State.

And along the way, Janey never lost her personal touch.

- She was friend and counselor to her colleagues on the Board;
- a loving wife, mother and grandmother to her family;
- a faithful and devoted servant to her church;
- a determined advocate and supporter of those most in need of a helping hand;
- and a scholar who never lost her love of learning or her commitment to education as society's highest calling.

John Wesley once issued this challenge to his followers:

“Let us then unite the two so long divided:
-- knowledge and vital piety.”

To an astonishing degree, Janey Briscoe’s life personified that unity.

- She was a good and noble woman
- whose piety clearly was manifest in her fidelity to her church and, perhaps more importantly, in her love of and outreach to others;
- and whose dedication to the advance of knowledge through universal access to higher learning was perhaps the crowning achievement of her remarkable life.

No recitation of Janey’s characteristics and contributions would be complete without mention of her devotion to Dolph Briscoe, her husband of 58 years, and their marriage which in so many ways framed their entire being and shaped their mutual commitment to public service.

- Each gained strength from the other
- and each was nourished by the other’s support.

Kahil Gibran once observed that

- “Real beauty lies in the spiritual accord that is called love
- which can and sometimes does exist between a man and a woman.
- Such love enables us to perceive life as a beautiful dream
- and empowers us unrelentingly to pursue that dream to fulfillment.”

Janey and Dolph shared many dreams

- some private
- and some public
- but always together.

Theirs was a remarkable marriage;

- and out of its energy flowed a great family,
- boundless faith,
- significant private enterprise,
- productive public service,
- and sustained loyalty to one another.

We , therefore, conclude in gratitude

- thankful for Janey's good life
- for Dolph's sustaining faith in his moment of greatest loss
- for Chip, Cele and Janey and their children who provide hope that their mother's commitment to the public good and to personal goodness will be extended for generations to come
- and for our own abiding sense that St. Paul was right in declaring:
"That neither death nor life,
neither messenger of Heaven nor monarch of earth,
neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow,
neither a power from on high nor a power from below,

nor anything else in the whole world

-- has any power to separate us from the love
of God.”

Such was the perspective,

-- the faith

-- and the confidence

-- of Janey Slaughter Briscoe.