

**Draft Remarks
For
President Tyler Wreathlaying Ceremony
29 Mar 2013 1100hrs
Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, VA**

Descendants of President Tyler,
Distinguished Guests,
Fellow citizens...

Today, we can find inspiration as we gather to lay a wreath to the memory and honor of President John Tyler, our nation's tenth Commander in Chief, on the 223rd anniversary of his birth.

President Tyler's contributions to his country were notable. He ascended the ladder to the presidency with a calm and self-assured attitude, always careful to be a responsible president and Virginian. For his courage and wisdom, he deserves the respect and gratitude of Americans in every state.

And, it is my great honor and privilege as the Commandant, US Army Transportation School and 26th Chief of Transportation, to again represent President Obama in placing a wreath at the grave of this great patriot ... who dedicated his life to building *this state* and *this nation*.

[Pause]

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President Tyler, a son of Virginia, was born at the home of his father, Greenway Estate, Charles City, Virginia, on March 29, 1790. He has a place in history, during the dynamic times preceding the civil war, and his courage and good sense deserve our respect today.

[Pause]

He moved steadily through a career of extraordinary breadth, and ever increasing responsibility . . . serving as a Congressman, Governor, and a Delegate to two Virginia State Constitutional Conventions. Also, was a United States Senator for nearly ten years, before being elected Vice President in 1840 . . . after a very spirited campaign, which featured the slogan “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too.”

When President Henry Harrison died just weeks after his inaugural, Vice President Tyler took over as President . . . not “acting President,” as some would have had it, but as President of our Nation and held the highest office of the land until 1845. His quick and decisive manner upon assuming the Presidency

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set a very important precedent, the right of succession that many other Vice Presidents have had to rely on since.

[Pause]

In my remarks last year, I spoke in detail on the many significant achievements of President Tyler's presidency, namely:

- the annexation of Texas – which would become our 28th state
- treaties that resolved border disputes and opened access to foreign ports
- bringing to an end the Seminole War
- his economic foresight in expanding the westward frontiers of a developing nation
- and, his many contributions that fueled the revival of commerce and manufacturing . . . and spurred growth in America's young cities.

From our vantage point today, two centuries removed from President Tyler's birth, we can examine and judge his many accomplishments. Long ago, however, the traits and characteristics which made him a man have faded from memory. But,

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once we thoroughly examine the written record of his life, we get a glimpse of his character and his values. This year, I would like to focus not on John Tyler the President . . . but John Tyler the man. What sort of man was he?

[Pause]

Would you be surprised to hear that President Tyler was a warm, affectionate and gracious man, with a keen sense of humor. Also, he was a tall, slender man with a pleasing countenance, commanding physical features and a very charming personality with strangers. He was an excellent farmer, poet, renowned orator, a devoted husband and understanding father to fifteen children.

President Tyler rejoiced in family life and had babies on his knee and toddlers underfoot, until he was in his late sixties and early seventies. During Christmas in 1855, he wrote to his sister-in law, “if you are half as merry as we are here, then you are all as merry as I could wish you to be. It is on the morning of Christmas that one realizes the happiness of having a house well filled with children.”

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[Pause]

He had an intense intellectual curiosity, loved books, and consequently was well read and possessed an extensive library.

Learning from his father, President Tyler was an excellent violin player, marksman and hunter. One of his favorite violin numbers, as written by many historians, was “Home Sweet Home.” President Tyler, loved to socialize, dance the Virginia Reel and had an overall robust love of life.

Also, he possessed all the dignified charm, grace and the soft, warm manner typical of the well-bred southerner of the early 19th century. He was described by the British novelist Charles Dickens as “mild and pleasant, remarkably unaffected manner, gentlemanly and agreeable.” But beneath President Tyler’s smooth demeanor was an iron will.

We also see a strong thread, which runs from his birth to his death in 1862, that of courage. As a young lad, his courage was on display. In an “old field school” at Greenway, students had to endure a

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teacher who was a bit of a tyrant. None of the students liked him, but not one would stand up to him. It was then that John Tyler, at the tender age of 11, stepped up to the plate, became their leader, and together, they changed things for the better. This trait served him well throughout his presidency.

A historian once said “greatness is won by an individual with courage, with knowledge of his duty, and with a sense of honor in action.” This, I suggest, is a perfect description of President John Tyler.

[Pause]

John Tyler was a complex man of high moral principles and impeccable character ... often foregoing the *accepted way* of conducting government affairs in accordance with *those* principles. He was a man torn by his vision of the United States as an enduring emblem of democracy to the world and his allegiance to his home state.

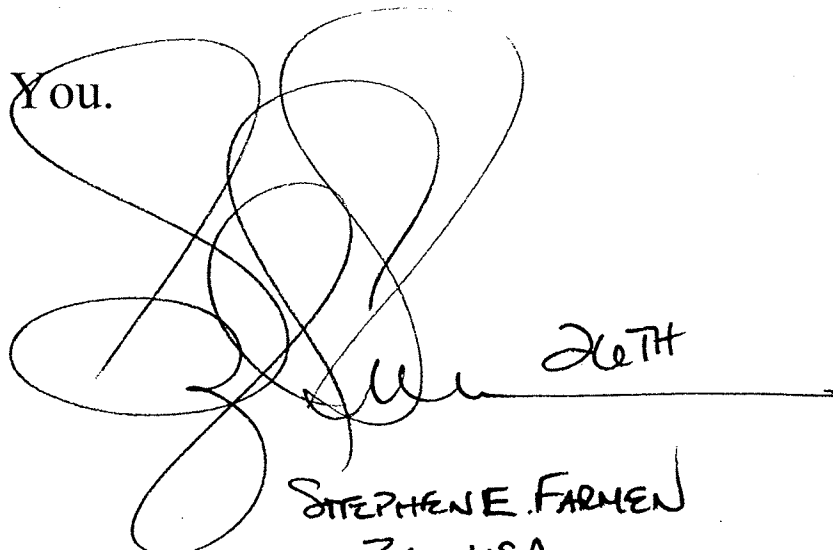
When the beautiful monument you see before you was dedicated on October 12, 1915, the speaker Honorable Armistead C. Gordon, drew an approving

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portrait of the man we honor again this day. I can think of no more fitting conclusion to my own remarks than to quote from that address:

“John Tyler, statesman and patriot, needs no eulogy. The austere epitome of his life and deeds can convey but an inadequate conception of his courage, his ability, his steadfastness, and his patriotic devotion to country. His dust reposes here beneath this monument, and on the page of history his fame itself is monumental. His name has been placed there, alongside those of the great leaders of our nation’s epic story and as long as the records shall endure he will be remembered and honored as one of its most illustrious sons.”

Thank You.



STEPHENE FARNEN
Br, USA

