

Introduction of Bill Hobby  
Texas Independence Day Dinner  
History Making Texan Award  
Texas State History Museum  
March 2, 2009

There are many ways to introduce Bill Hobby: teacher, distinguished professor, university chancellor, newspaper editor, Naval Officer, the longest serving Lieutenant Governor in Texas history, where he was an expert on redistricting and state budgets,

But for this Texas Independence Day, I think it better for you to get a glimpse of his Texas DNA, that runs through Texas government, and, in particular the State Capitol: from grandparents who served in the Texas Legislature, to a mother who was Clerk of the House, a father who was Governor of Texas, and to a very young Bill Hobby who served as parliamentarian for the Texas Senate.

Bill was first elected Lieutenant Governor at a time when Texas state government was at one of its lowest ebbs. Texans had had two years of turmoil: a banking scandal; legislators going to jail for stealing postage stamps—in large quantities I might add, enough to buy a pickup truck; a Speaker of the House indicted and convicted; careers of other high profile politicians ended.

He ran on a simple platform: “Bill Hobby will be a good Lieutenant Governor—honestly.”

A five-second platform—no long-winded attempts to explain or convince.

He made a promise. He kept his promise. And for 18 years the people of Texas enthusiastically elected him to the most powerful public office in the state—because—they trusted him.

In an era of emerging partisan politics, Bill Hobby worked with Democrats and Republicans. At a time when Democrats had a large majority in the Texas Senate, he appointed the first Republicans to chair important committees. He helped Republican and Democratic governors achieve their goals.

Earlier I mentioned that he was overwhelmingly re-elected term after term because the people of Texas trusted him. In my opinion, that trust was based on Bill Hobby's respect for the people of this state and his desire to do the right thing for them. He trusted the people as they trusted him.

After Bill Hobby's ninth and final legislative session, *Texas Monthly* magazine waived its usual rule that made presiding officers ineligible for the magazine's Best and Worst Legislators list.

Here are their reasons for putting Bill Hobby at the top of the Best list.

"Bill Hobby has had more effect on Texas government for a longer time with a better end result than anyone since Sam Houston.

Hobby exercised power as he always has, through respect rather than fear. Like a model of positive parenting, he guides through praise and example. He usually gets what he wants—not because he demands it but because he is so far ahead of other leaders that he sets the agenda for the entire state.

He has never cared about anything but what is best for Texas. He has run the Senate for seventeen years, without a hint of corruption, and he has brought Texas government into the modern age."

That is quite a tribute to a History Making Texan; however, you should know that Bill Hobby is a man of few words. None of us has ever heard him give a long-winded speech or even an extended discussion. He makes his point, takes action, and moves on.

Over the years, people who were to have an appointment with the Lieutenant Governor would ask if I had any advice as to how they could be effective in persuading Governor Hobby to their point of view. I always gave the same advice: distill your case into no more than three minutes. He will know more about your subject than you do. If you get carried away, you will lose ground.

Let me share a personal experience:

Over the years, Bill and I used to play a regular game of racquetball. About three years before he stepped down as Lieutenant Governor, we

played a late afternoon game. As we were leaving the locker room, I asked him if, when he left public office, he would consider teaching at the LBJ School. He said he would think about it. That conversation took about 30 seconds.

Two years later, after a similar game, we were leaving the same locker room. Bill said, “Max, do you remember that conversation we had about my coming to the LBJ School?” I said I did. He said, “I might be interested.” I said, “Fine.”

Another year later—the same scene was reenacted. He told me he thought he would like to teach at the LBJ School. I said, “Okay.”

The rest is history.

Forty-five seconds over three years.

That’s Bill Hobby. Without a lot of fanfare Bill made a commitment to invest himself in the lives of young people who believed in public service. His students are now involved in some kind of public service all over the world.

My guess is that on this significant occasion Bill may take a little more than 45 seconds. But as he shares his commitment to Texas he will demonstrate that not only has he been a Texan who made history, he continues to make history by charting a course for a better Texas.

Bill Hobby.