

**Honorable Michael M. Reyna
Chairman and CEO
Farm Credit Administration
Remarks Upon
Receiving the
LBJ School of Public Affairs Alumni Association's
Distinguished Public Service Award for 2003
Austin, Texas
March 5, 2004**

Dean Dorn, thank you; I am pleased to be here with you and so many other special guests this evening who are attending the Barbara Jordan National Forum.

My thanks to the LBJ School Alumni Association, and in particular to Robert Clifton and Cassius Johnson for your kind remarks this evening. I am very grateful for the recognition that goes along with receiving the Distinguished Public Service Award for 2003. Please know that while this award acknowledges my efforts to date ... I truly believe it reflects all the good works and ongoing outstanding efforts of LBJ alumni everywhere.

Award ceremonies like this one are great for lots of reasons, but in my opinion, the most important reason is that it gives the award recipient a chance to acknowledge and thank people who have been critical to their success. With that in mind, I ask your indulgence while I acknowledge and thank some of the many individuals who have been critical to my success over the years.

First however, let me say that I believe that life is about relationships; the relationship we have with ourselves; the relationship we have with those around us (our family and friends, and the broader community); and, like the faithful among you ... I believe it is about the relationship we have with God too.

One of the most important relationships is the one between a student and his or her teacher. I have had some great teachers through the years. Some have been formal teachers, while others have been friends and mentors; some are here tonight, and others are not, and still others have since passed away. They share a common thread in that they have touched my life and I have learned from them all.

My thanks go to all those "formal" teachers who have helped me along the way, including:

Former Congresswoman, and later professor, Barbara Jordan – a deep and profound thinker of Watergate fame, who first asked if I had ever considered doing the "people's business" and then later taught me why it is so important to do the people's business ... and to do it ethically. Thanks to her I chose public service as a career path.

Professor Leigh Boske, who taught me about transportation policy...but also the importance of balancing work and family.

Professor Dick Schott, who taught me about management and organizational psychology, while encouraging me to think deeply about my goals in life.

Professor Lodis Rhodes, who stepped in at the last minute as an alternate second reader for my Professional Report (Master's Thesis), when it would have been easier for him to just walk away.

Professor Vic Arnold, who believed in me when many others did not.

All the folks on staff here at the school who I know and have worked with over the years, including Courtney Brown, Debbie Warden, Lana Morris, Stephanie Hill, Marilyn Duncan, Maria de Luz Martinez and many, many others.

And then there are those informal teachers -- friends and mentors -- from my professional life that I would like to acknowledge and thank as well, including:

State Senator John Vasconcellos, who has been called the "conscience" of the California State Legislature, but who ... among many other things ... is also a humanist, a promoter of self-esteem and personal and social responsibility, a visionary leader moving the state he loves so dearly ... and indeed our nation ... towards a "politics of trust."

Former California State Assemblyman Peter Chacon, a good and decent man who fought long and hard to make sure the doors of opportunity -- including voting rights, education and housing - were open to Latinos and everyone else.

Mario Obledo, former Secretary of the California Health and Welfare Agency, co-founder of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and the National Hispanic Bar Association and who, among many other things, is a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient and a long-time Civil Rights leader.

Joe Serna, a teacher and former Mayor of Sacramento, whose leadership on education, economic development and the environment helped to revitalize the city he loved so dearly and improve the quality of life for all residents.

Ilene Jacobs, who as Director of Litigation, Advocacy and Training for California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA), gives hope and a voice to the poor and underprivileged. Believe me, you don't want to be in front of a judge on the opposite side of an issue when Ilene is involved in the case. She was the reason USDA Rural Development prevailed in court when the City of Galt, California attempted to block the construction of housing for low income families in their community.

My work associates, Joy Burr -- one of the most dedicated and hard-working persons I have ever met, and Claire Rusk -- whose sixth sense is truly magical. Both are simply amazing ... and "outstanding" I might add ... at what they do -- and they enable me to do what I do "better" and otherwise just make it fun to be at work everyday.

Mark McCloskey, a long time close personal friend who is here tonight ... and who has been there for me many nights before -- I have always been able to count on you - thank you. And, still others who have been supportive of me during good times like tonight, but through some very tough personal and professional times as well, including Estaban Almanza and Julio Massad, both of whom are bright and caring stand-up guys with rock solid character. And Gina Briley-Space, simply the brightest person I have

ever had the pleasure to work with, and Toni Symonds, who is the most creative and innovative person I have ever had the pleasure to work with. These hard-working individuals are the definition of friendship.

And then there are those teachers in my immediate family I wish to acknowledge and thank too, including:

Dorothy and Ron Pettit, my mother and father in-law, for their ongoing love and support ... as well as my brother in-law David and his wife Robin and their family for their ongoing love and friendship. Similarly, I want to acknowledge Lazan and Bill Pargaman, and their family, for their ongoing love and friendship too.

And though my father passed away many years ago, I want to especially thank my mother Lorene for all her love and attention ... but most of all for her patience with me.

All my brothers and sisters whom I not only love and respect, but in particular my brother Robert – who I truly admire – and his son Paul, both of whom are here tonight.

My handsome, bright and talented sons Sean and Ryan, who I have taught and encouraged to question authority ... only to find that, that is exactly what they do best ... question authority ... mine, in particular.

My wife Karen ... your love has made me a better husband ... a better father ... but most of all ... a better person. I love you.

I have long believed that the purpose of life ... is a life of purpose; in fact, it is this very belief that led me to choose the path of public service and has sustained me throughout my career. While there are those individuals who would like you to believe otherwise ... each person, in fact, has the power to impact the world in a positive way. The real question for each of us is...will we choose to do so. You see ... we must never forget that while we are all “students” in life, through our words and actions, we are “teachers” in life as well.

And, the key to make a real lasting difference in the world is to first make a real lasting difference in our own lives. It is true and as has been said many times ... we must “be” the change in the world we wish to see. And though we may be tempted otherwise, we must never lose faith or hope that love always conquers ignorance, fear and hate.

If we want a world that is more tolerant and understanding ... then we must be more tolerant and understanding ourselves.

If we want a world that is more kind and loving ... then we must be more kind and loving ourselves.

If we want a world that is more caring and peaceful ... then we must be more caring and peaceful ourselves.

Public service is indeed a noble endeavor; this is because it calls us to work on behalf of the “greater good” of all mankind. As Robert Kennedy and many others have

urged us before: we must never forget that God's work on earth is truly our own ... He has no hands but ours.

I am truly grateful for the honor you bestow upon me tonight. The award indeed is reflective of all the good works and ongoing outstanding efforts of all LBJ alumni everywhere. Thank you.