



1965: At the dedication of Eufaula Dam, Lady Bird Johnson stole the show from Lyndon when she told the crowd: “Bob Kerr has sat in my kitchen so many times and talked about the Arkansas River, I know the project by heart.” Below: W. L. Boland, left, and Col. John W. Morris, right, welcomed President Johnson to Eufaula.



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would carry the day, however. Supporters pulled together a fast and delicate strategy, including a bold threat by Newt Graham to veto, if necessary, six years of work by the multi-state and multi-agency AWRBIAC (Arkansas-White-Red Basins Interagency Committee) that was chaired by the Corps.

Col. Francis J. Wilson (by then retired from the Corps and Graham’s engineering consultant) persuaded the Chief of Engineers to direct Washington’s Eric Bottoms, who had led the waterway’s earlier economic study for the Corps’ Board of Rivers and Harbors, to review its feasibility again.

The strategy worked on multiple fronts. Tulsa Congressman Page Belcher, a Republican, had been an important friend to the Republican Eisenhower administration, and Belcher wrote the President asking for help with the Bureau of the Budget.

“If this doesn’t get through,” Belcher reportedly told the President, “there’ll be a Democrat up here from my district next year.”¹¹

It was sometime later that Belcher heard from Eisenhower’s representative that the Bureau had agreed to an appropriation the following year. “We will just throw the towel in and they can just go along with the Arkansas River,” Belcher was told.¹²