

LYNDON JOHNSON AND THE WATERWAY

With the Vietnam War haunting him in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson ordered a freeze on new civil works construction starts and proposed cutting \$14 million from Tulsa District waterway funds.

The reaction from Oklahoma and Arkansas was sure and swift. The loss would set back the waterway project five years and cost \$40 to \$50 million, argued a high-powered delegation of six senators and six representatives who met with Johnson on July 29, 1964.

The President listened for 30 minutes and questioned each visitor individually, they later recalled. Then he reached under the blotter pad on his desk and pulled out a paper.

"John," he said to Senator McClellan, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, "you've convinced me. I have

something here for the committee. Should I send it down or do you want to take it?"

"What is it?" McClellan asked.

"A request for additional money."

"I'll take it down."

On Sept. 25 of that year, Lyndon Johnson gave the principal address when Eufaula Dam was dedicated. He recalled that he had begun the year with "a prudent budget."

"And," the President said with a gleam in his eye, "I was determined to keep it that way until Mike Monroney, Carl Albert, John McClellan, and all this bunch of hijackers from Oklahoma came . . . and it cost me \$14 million, but I got your Arkansas River back on schedule . . .

"As President, I am here to promise you that it will go on schedule."¹¹



Left, visitors view Eufaula Dam the day before its 1964 dedication, which drew President Lyndon Johnson to Oklahoma. Eufaula was a key element in the navigation system.