

**Remarks of  
Congressman Joe Moakley  
Re-Dedication of  
Columbus Park  
South Boston, MA  
4/28/01**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be the initials 'JM'.A faint, handwritten signature in grey ink, which is mostly illegible but appears to be a name.

# MY FRIENDS - MY NEIGHBORS

Let me begin by thanking Mayor Tom Menino for his thoughtfulness in making this incredible <sup>TRIBUTE</sup> gesture. It is difficult to find words to express my gratitude to the Mayor, personally, to Mike Kineavy and to the people of Boston, to Tom McIntyre and the Brick Layers Union, for making this possible. //

Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever imagined such an honor, as to have the park where I played as a kid, bear my name. //

YOUNGSTER

When I was a youngster, and probably more than a few of you might remember, I grew up only a short way from here. /

My mother and father, my brothers Bob, Tom, and I lived at Fifty-One Logan Way over in the Old Harbor Project. / NOW KNOWN AS THE MCCORMACK

I've got to tell you, when we moved in there, we thought we had really hit the big time. /

We actually had a fridge with ice cube trays. / We could make ice in our own house. / It was miraculous. /

The two things I was taught – more than anything else, – other than Catechism of course, – were to live for the people ↑ upstairs, ↓ downstairs, ↓ and over the back fence, and that you should never, ever forget where you came from. /

Everyone I ever knew were brought up to understand that life is about loyalty, ↓ that your word is your bond, ↓ that good neighbors and fair play, ↓ make a great neighborhood. /

And whether I'm in Washington, or California, Marco Island, or down the Cape, the people I meet from the neighborhood don't just say "Hi, Joe, I'm from Boston." They say, "Hey, Joe Moakley, I'm from Southie, P Street, between fifth and Sixth." or "Hello, Congressman, did you know my Aunt Mary from City Point? Or " my grandfather drove the ice truck down the Lower End, and he says he knew your father."

I love that.

I love it because that is who I am ✓  
I've said many, many times that as  
much as my parents <sup>HELPED</sup> ~~did~~, this Town  
is what made me who I am. ✓

I wouldn't trade my upbringing for  
anything. ✓ What I learned right here  
prepared me for every success I've  
ever had in life. ✓ It is this  
neighborhood that raised me. ✓ It is  
this neighborhood that first elected  
me in 1952, and it is this  
neighborhood that brought me TO  
where I am. TODAY. ✓



**And I'm proud to say that other than my military service, and my weekly commute to Washington, I've never lived outside of Ward Seven, my entire life.**

**Growing up, just over there on the other side of this park, I can remember walking up to the Boys Club.**

**To this day, I can still see the banner on the wall that said. "The Battle of Waterloo was won many years before on the Playing fields of Eton," and it's always stuck in my mind.**

At the time I didn't know much about Waterloo, or Napoleon for that matter, and I wasn't sure where the Fields of Eton were exactly, but I sensed the over all meaning. /

On the playing field, you learn camaraderie, discipline, sportsmanship, and respect for the rules of the game, and you learn respect for others. /

And as a youngster, I learned ~~on~~ <sup>in</sup> the ~~fields~~ <sup>PARKS</sup> and streets of South Boston some of the most valuable lessons of my life. /



Our playing fields have always been, and remain the public parks around the neighborhood. And it is in Parks just like this one that **WE** learned that good neighbors and fair play go a long way to make a neighborhood great. Because the friendships we build can last a lifetime.

We didn't have much growing up, but we had each other. And, I'll tell you, every corner had a football or baseball team.

When I was a kid we had The Willows, Chipewas, The Blackhawks, the Knockies, the Wildcats, the Aces, and on and on. //

We had our pick-up games right here at Columbus Park, or down M-Street Park, and we played half-ball in the middle of the street. / Not one of us had a nickel but there was always something to do. /

If we wanted a shower we'd go to the "Muni", where for a penny you'd get a towel the size of a handkerchief and a bar of soap the size of a matchbook. /

**During the summer, my bathtub was Carson Beach. /**

**And today, we look out on a beautiful and clean Boston Harbor, and a brand new Bath House on Carson Beach named for my old pal, Eddie McCormack. /**

**In winter, the City used to flood the middle of Columbus Park so people from the neighborhood could go ice skating, but only if it got cold enough outside for the water to freeze. /**

**I can still remember getting a pair of skates for Christmas. /**

Of course you'd get them three sizes too big — you know — so they'd last.

For the first two years, you'd slide around on your ankles until they fit, or you could wear four pairs of socks to try and get the things fit at a little early. But we were all in the same boat.

Probably not much different from today, when I was a kid, every guy had a nickname, and once you got it -- it stuck for life.

I knew Giggles, Bubbles, Peanuts,  
Lefty, Bugs, Booty, Lymo, and Doc.  
They were just the guys on the  
South Boston High football team.  
Actually I quit South Boston High  
after Pearl Harbor and joined the  
service with a guy named Jug Head.  
But these are the folks that made me  
who I am.

Through learning how to play on a  
team, we learned that a real  
champion acts without worrying  
about the fan fare or showmanship,  
but instead with confidence,  
perseverance, and determination.



**Actually, I'm reminded of a young Jack Kennedy when he was asked how he became such a hero during World War II, and he remarked quite simply, "I didn't have much to do with it, a Japanese Destroyer cut my patrol boat in half."**

**No one would ever challenge President Kennedy's heroism, it spoke for itself, so there was no need for him to speak of it.**

**Every street corner in South Boston carries the name of one of our own local heroes, who's playing fields were not those of Eton, but parks right here in South Boston.**

And whether it's World War One,  
World War Two, Korea, Vietnam,  
Kosovo, or the Middle East, South  
Boston has produced some of the  
best men and women this country  
has ever known.

Every weekend, and most evenings,  
the heroes that live among us every  
day pass on to the next generation  
those very same values, I learned  
growing up.

**Whether in Babe Ruth Baseball,  
Pop Warner Football, South Boston  
Youth Hockey League, the Boys and  
Girls Club, the Neighborhood  
House, playing soccer or lacross,  
South Boston keeps the faith.**

**This park belongs to the  
neighborhood. And it belongs to my  
neighbors. Everything I've become  
in public life is because of you.**

**Without your vote, I would not have  
the privilege to serve. And the  
support and loyalty of my friends  
right here continue to make my life  
a wonderful experience.**