

## Hail to the Chief

In the winter of 1991, Coppell resident Phillip Umphres was serving as Assistant United States Attorney in the Dallas office. Among his many duties, Phillip served as first point of contact for the Secret Service when the President of the United States visited the area. That is how, on December 19th, he found himself part of the official convoy bringing President George H. W. Bush to Cafe 121 in Coppell.

The President was visiting the area to sign a transit bill aimed at producing jobs and revamping the country's highway systems and mass transit. The bill was signed near State Highway 360 and then the President "spontaneously" invited local construction workers out to lunch. The group proceeded to Cafe 121, a little pink diner located at the corner of N. Coppell Rd and 121.

Umphres recalls that the parking lot quickly filled with official vehicles and that much of the convoy was forced to park beyond a neighboring trailer park. As the President ventured inside to eat, the Secret Service set up an armed perimeter around the restaurant to ensure his safety.

Phillip initially opted to remain outside, and recalls that a young Coppell boy, presumably playing hooky from school, approached one of the Secret Service agents.

"What's going on over there?" he asked, looking at the cafe.

Drawing himself to his full height, the agent responded with gravity.

"Son," he said, "the President of the United States is in that building."

At this, the wide eyed boy looked straight at the agent and uttered an expletive. Thus was the Commander in Chief welcomed to the City of Coppell.

10/09/2015