

City Welcomes Lady Bird

It was a day that Stamford won't soon forget.

The drizzle that started in mid-morning conveniently stopped by 1:30, just in time for Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson's arrival for the dedication of Kiwanis Park, first completed urban renewal project.

Extra police, Secret Service and FBI men were on hand to take care of the 2,200 people that came to welcome the President's wife, and the Signal Corps set up special equipment to handle the public address system.

Stamford High School's championship band played "Yellow Rose of Texas" in honor of that state's illustrious citizen, who was escorted into the vest pocket park by Congressman Donald J. Irwin, Mayor Bruno Giordano, and two girls from the Stamford Comets color guards, Capt. Barbara Orris, 13, and Co-Capt. Linda Chowka, 15.

After Mrs. Johnson pressed a switch, sending up a 10-foot jet from the fountain donated by the Kiwanis Club,

she took a few minutes to shake hands with some of the City officials, officers of boards and commissions and community groups.

And she took a minute to hug five-year-old Craig Allan Schanz and give him her autograph, because his letter to her, telling of his love for his own flowers at home, had brought a special White House invitation to the ceremony for him and his mother, Mrs. Donna Schanz (special policewoman).

Then she left as quickly and graciously as she had arrived, smiling and shaking hands with her hosts, posing for last minute news pictures, and she was whisked away to the Federated Garden Club of America's festivities in Greenwich.

At the URC's reception at the Summerset Restaurant (Mrs. Johnson couldn't attend) Eugene Jones, consulting engineer to the URC, explained how the idea of the park began.

"I made a study of parks for the Park Commission about 10 years ago," he said,

"and it's still being followed." (Cummings Park is an example.)

About a year and a half ago, he said, he spoke to the Kiwanis Club about urban renewal and he suggested that the club sponsor a park.

Mr. Bletchman, who was club president at the time, took the hint, and the club began a series of meetings with the URC to see how their sponsorship might work out.

The Park Commission cooperated, too, by encouraging the club and urging other clubs to do the same.

The club's donation, besides all the time and effort involved, was \$7,500 for the fountain.

Total construction cost to URC was \$91,706. The commission has pointed out that the \$25,000 required to resurface the north wall of the park would have been needed, no matter how the space was used, since the Strand and the adjacent Palace Theatres shared a "party wall."