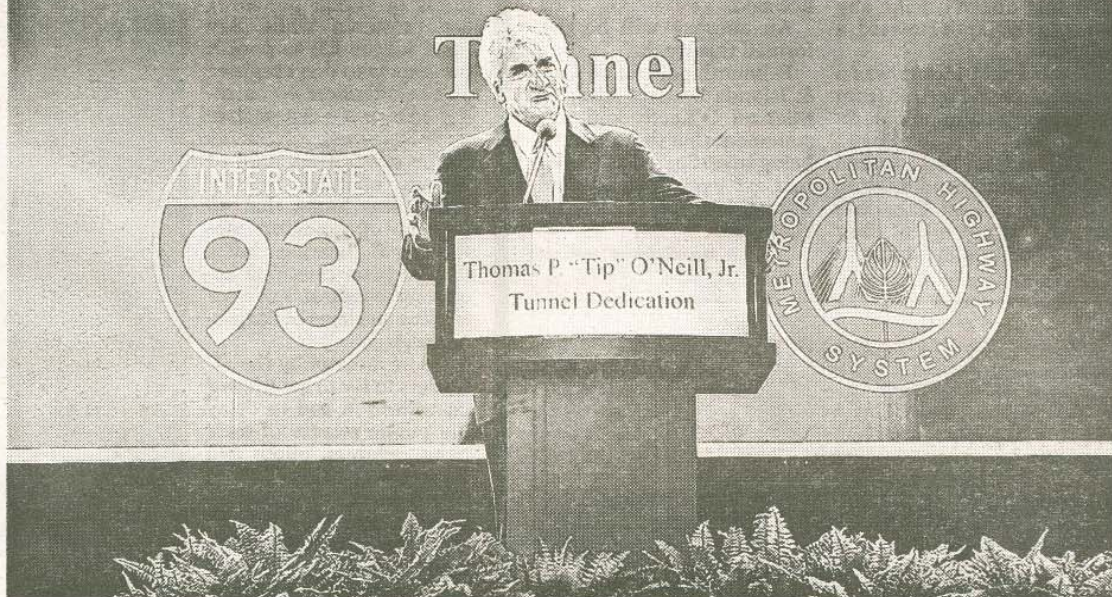


Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, Jr

Tunnel



STAFF PHOTOS BY NANCY LANE

DIG THIS: Thomas P. O'Neill III, son of the late Thomas P. 'Tip' O'Neill Jr., speaks at the tunnel dedication for his father yesterday. Below, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, former Gov. Michael Dukakis and Sen. John Kerry look on.

Tunnel dedication tips hat to O'Neill

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

It was a tunnel dedication with the feel of an Irish wake as hundreds of friends of late House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill Jr. gathered yesterday to toast the late House Speaker and dedicate a Big Dig tunnel in his name.

Against the backdrop of a city skyline once marred by the old elevated Central Artery, top congressional Democrats credited O'Neill with using his wit, savvy and political muscle to launch the nation's largest public infrastructure project.

"Today, Boston is getting the chance to tell Tip that we'll never forget what he meant to us, or what he did for us," U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy said. "Congratulations, Mr. Speaker, on a job well done."



Other top Dems on hand included House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Iraq war critic Rep. John Murtha (D-Penn.), and Sen. John Kerry, (D-Mass.). Al-

though he never lived to see the project completed, O'Neill — who retired in 1987 and died in 1994 — was instrumental at its early stages, battling with a Reagan administration

leery of its initial \$2.6 billion price tag. The trouble-plagued Big Dig ended up costing more than \$14.6 billion and transformed downtown Boston.