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Dedicatory Address of Mike Mansfield - Tower Junction Bridge Yellowstone National Park

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DEDICATORY ADDRESS
OF
SENATOR MIKE MANFIELD
MAJORITY LEADER, UNITED STATES SENATE
TOWER JUNCTION BRIDGE
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK
Sunday, June 2, 1963 - 12:00 Noon

I cannot tell you how pleased I am to be here for the official opening ceremonies of the Tower Junction Bridge -- not only because of the progressive step which it marks in meeting the needs of the public, but also because of the refreshing change in physical surroundings from already hot, and always humid, Washington, D. C.

There is no greater relief from the cares of the world than to gaze upon the natural beauties and feel the calm serenity of the Big Sky Country. My audience today doesn't need to be reminded of that. But there are millions who do need to be told of the scenic wonders of the great Northwest, and that is where you and I come in. It is incumbent upon us to not only advertise the attractions which we possess, but to jealously conserve and preserve them in that state which most benefits the public. This means that we must plan for the future. Whether the issue be polluted streams or polluted air, or preventive maintenance or construction of access roads and bridges, constant vigilance and sacrifice are demanded of all of us.

The bridge which we are dedicating today is in the best tradition of careful planning to meet the needs of a public which is becoming increasingly aware of its natural heritage. Back in the winter of 1870-1871, when Mr. C. J. Barnett constructed the first bridge across the Yellowstone River near this site, he could never have dreamed of the volume of traffic that this area would someday bear.

I am told that the average daily traffic on the route served by this bridge was 465 vehicles during the 1960 tourist season. By 1969, the figure is expected to rise to 1,300. The accuracy of forecasting has come a long way since Mr. Baronett's day. And so has our ability to mobilize our resources to meet any challenge.

The bridge which we are about to declare officially open stands as a symbol of the cooperation and hard work of many interested individuals and agencies -- both public and private. True, it is chiefly the responsibility of the Mission 66 people of the Interior Department's National Park Service. And I want to say that they are discharging their responsibility in a commendable manner.

But there is much more involved when a government agency keeps faith with its mandate to serve the public's interest. It proves that its work is really just an extension of the efforts of all of us. The construction of this bridge is a good example. The individuals staffing the government agencies involved are dedicated public servants. The money for the project was authorized by a Congress of duly elected representatives in a free society. The actual construction of the bridge was carried out by a private firm. And members of the U. S. Highway 212 Association and other interested citizens have worked magnificently to insure the success of the modernization program, not only here, but throughout the northern tier of Western states.

I am confident that this spirit of cooperation will continue. Certainly there is every reason for it to do so. Additional Mission

66 projects include road improvements from Tower Junction to the Northeast Entrance of the Park. Repairs are going forward on the Beartooth Highway in both Montana and Wyoming. Officially, this has been renamed the Beartooth Highway, but for us and for most Montanans, I am afraid it will always be the Red Lodge-Cooke City Highway. Present allocations call for bridge and guard rail construction on the Wyoming side and roughly nine miles of road reconstruction extending from the border down over the switchbacks toward Red Lodge. I am hopeful that additional funds will be allocated this year by Congress to extend this reconstruction even closer to Red Lodge.

It is difficult to predict with precision just what the economic effects will be in a given area as a result of such modernization. However, the figures already given of traffic counts in this area would indicate that each step forward in tourist mobility is a step forward economically for the States involved. And certainly the jobs provided for unemployed workers are of real importance. I am sure my good friends in the Red Lodge area who have benefited in recent months from Area Redevelopment and Accelerated Public Works construction projects will agree to that.

If the vehicular traffic is expected to more than double at this very spot by 1960, the responsibilities of the States which provide the access routes will be considerable. If those responsibilities are met, and well-planned and orderly expansion of transportation facilities is brought about, then truly great economic benefits can be harvested.

I know that you are anxious to "get the show on the road", so I shall close my remarks here. I want to thank all of you for the opportunity to be present at this ceremony. Thank you.