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Transcript of Radio Tape of Senator Mike Mansfield

Dedication of Tower Junction Bridge
June 2, 1963

On behalf of the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior, I welcome you here today.....

I daresay that our distinguished senator and guest today appreciates the fact that I have received from various and sundry sources how I should introduce him today. For what comfort it may be to the senator, I shall abandon all advice I have received and do this in the manner which I feel personally proper. For me to stand here today and to attempt to decide how I would personally feel, and do personally feel, on this occasion I might say that anyone in this audience or anywhere else who has the opportunity, as I have today, and the privilege that I have today, if they were to deny it would be not quite telling the truth. Because it is a distinct privilege and an honor. I think that most of us here would agree that I would serve little purpose if I attempted to go into the magnificent achievements of this gentleman and his efforts for they are not only well known to everyone of us here today and everyone in this state, but equally as well known by everyone in these United States. I might also add his reputation and achievements and respect are known the world around. So, as I said, it would be of little purpose for me to go into it at this time. But it is indeed a distinct privilege and an honor for me to have the opportunity to introduce to you, for the purpose of giving the dedicatory address and dedicating this dam, a man of whom all of us in Montana, and this area in particular, are proud, the senior senator of the state of Montana and the distinguished Majority Leader of the United States Senate, Mike Mansfield.

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Thank you, Orvin, for the very kind and deeply appreciated words.

Our Father , the Reverend Lee, Mr. Garrison, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Thomas, and all of those who are broiling in the sun, furnishing us entertainment and inspiration, the Red Lodge High School band, and my fellow Americans; when I say my fellow Americans, I say it with a true and a deep appreciation of what this country means to me and what this country means to us. Just now I have been introduced by a man whose parents were Norwegian immigrants and he introduced a man whose parents were Irish immigrants. I think that tells alot about this country because, while the son of Irish immigrants turns out to be a Democrat and the son of Norwegian immigrants turned out to be a Republican, nevertheless that indicates that in this country of ours there is not only opportunity but there is also room--- plenty of room---for differences of opinion. As long as we have legitimate differences of opinion in this country, then so long will this country remain a great one.

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 this marks in meeting the needs of the public, but also because of the refreshing escape of physical surroundings of 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 beauty and feel the calm serenity of the Big Sky Country of Montana and Wyoming.

Our audience today doesn't need to be reminded of that. Neither do the officials who are here today on this platform, among them my good friend, the mayor of Red Lodge, who has been so instrumental in bringing about this particular dedicatory ceremony.

But there are millions who do need to be told of the scenic wonders of the great Rocky Mountain West and this is where you and I come in. It is incumbent upon us to not only advertise the attractions we possess, but also to zealously conserve and preserve them in a way which most benefits the public. This means that we must plan for the future whether the issue be polluted streams or polluted air; or maintenance of access roads and bridges; constant vigilance and sacrifices 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 habitanace.

Back in the winter of 1870-71, a Mr. C. J. Baronet constructed the first bridge across the Yellowstone River near this site. He could never have dreamed of the volume of traffic which this area would someday bear. I am told that the average daily traffic on the routes served by this bridge was 465 vehicles during the 1960 tourist season. By 1980 the figure is expected to reach at least 1,500. The accuracy of forecasting has come a long way since Mr. Baronet's day and so has our ability to mobilize our resources to meet any challenge. The bridge which we are about to declare as officially opened stands as a symbol of the cooperation and hard work of many interested

individuals and agencies, both public and private. It is chiefly the responsibility of the Mission 66 people of the Interior Department's National Park Service, and I want to salute them for discharging their responsibility in a highly commendable manner. But there is much more involved. When a government agency keeps pace 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 the Congress of duly elected representatives of a free society. The actual construction of the bridge was paid off 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 improvement 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 those of us who are from Montana are going to find it quite hard to get used to the word Beartooth, even though it is more appropriate, and to get away from the use of the old Red Lodge-Cooke City designation. Present allocations call for bridge and guard rail construction

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on the Wyoming side and roughly nine miles of road reconstruction extending from the border down over the switchback towards Red Lodge. I am hopeful that additional funds will be allocated this year by Congress to extend this reconstruction even further to Red Lodge. It is difficult to predict with precision just what the economic approach will be in a given area as a result of such modernization. However, the figures already given for this area indicate that each step forward in tourist mobility is a step forward economically for the state involved. 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 this redevelopment and accelerated public works construction work will agree to that.

If the vehicular traffic is expected to more than double at this very spot by 1980, the responsibilities of the state which provides the access routes would be considerable. If the 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 all of you are anxious to get to the chuckwagon lunch as am I. I know also that in large part, or at least in some part, we have with us today a captive audience because, as I watch the rope that is across the road at each end, I see that no cars are moving and many of them are there, not because of choice but because they have no choice.

I want to thank all of you for coming here. I want to

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thank those who invited me and I want to assure you once again that, for me, it is indeed a real and a personal pleasure to participate in an occasion of this kind and to do so in the country of the Big Sky. Thank you very much.