



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE,
AT THE DEDICATION OF THE DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER MEMORIAL BRIDGE, SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 8, 1969, ANDERSON, INDIANA, 1:30 P.M.

This is a glorious occasion. We meet to honor a great man -- one of the greatest Americans of all time. And we do it by dedicating a bridge in his name. I am sure that General Eisenhower would be a little annoyed at all this fuss being made over him; but he would be delighted that our memorial to him -- this span that unites two divided points -- would be of service to the people. For service was the creed of that great gentleman, statesman and soldier whom we honor here today.

And what a pleasure to see so many old and dear friends. The young Mrs. David Eisenhower ... and President Eisenhower's granddaughter, Susan.

I am happy that our Department of Transportation could work with you people of Madison County in building this bridge. The \$700,000 in Federal funds is money well spent. Transportation is, in fact, the thread of continuity that runs through our economic and social life. The history of our Nation is, in fact, the story of the development of transportation. All our major cities originated as transportation hubs and our national growth was dependent upon the means of available transport. The era of horseback saw our growth limited to the original small thirteen colonies.

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The opening of the national road and the era of river travel and canal building saw our people move hundreds of miles westward into this -- our great midwest. The railroad, in a few short years, pushed our boundaries across the plains, through the Rockies to the Pacific. Each improvement in transportation meant that new States were brought into the union. And it is not a coincidence that the advent of the jet airliner and the admission of Hawaii and Alaska to statehood all came at about the same time -- during the Eisenhower Administration, I might add.

Yes, it is easy to see that transportation is -- and always has been -- America's lifeline, connecting natural resources with manufacturing, bringing products to consumers, and allowing Americans the freedom of mobility that they have come to demand.

It was this dependence of our economic growth on the growth and prosperity of transportation that prompted President Eisenhower, back in 1956, to propose and cause to be enacted the legislation which inaugurated our great Interstate Highway System.

Like all military men, he had a keen interest in transportation. It is not generally known, but back in 1919 -- exactly half a century ago -- a young Lieutenant Colonel Dwight Eisenhower was second in command of the United States Army's first transcontinental motor truck convoy.

That convoy traveled from Washington, D.C., to Denver, Colorado -- most of the way along the route of what is now Interstate 70, under construction from coast to coast.

The purpose of that early experiment was to demonstrate the practicality of transcontinental truck travel, and to promote Federal support of an Interstate Highway network.

Some 37 years after that trip, President Eisenhower signed into law the bill authorizing construction of the very first National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. I was privileged, as Commissioner of Public Works in Massachusetts, to have participated in the drafting of that bill -- and it was a signal honor for me when the President asked if I would serve as the Nation's first Federal Highway Administrator. The press of personal responsibilities did not allow me to take the position on a permanent basis, but I did agree to serve for some six months to get the program started.

President Nixon has been no less concerned with transportation. He has given me the responsibility of preparing a long range plan to meet this Nation's transportation needs -- to bring out of our present confused transportation picture, a truly balanced system of transportation. We are working toward a plan for this Nation in which each mode of transportation fulfills its mission without conflict or infringement on the others.

The demand for transportation in the years ahead will be such that we need -- indeed, we will see -- vast expansion in all modes; on air, on land, and at sea. We are planning now, to make sure that this expansion will be efficient, effective, and in the best interests of the national

economy and defense. It is to President Nixon's great credit that he has recognized the challenge that lies ahead in transportation and has called for the establishment of a national transportation policy.

I have learned from working with President Nixon of his calm and reasonable common sense. And I am reminded again of his responsible approach as we honor a great soldier-statesman here today. Sitting here, paying tribute to the memory of the man who secured the peace in Europe a quarter-century ago, I thought again of Richard Nixon and his efforts to bring peace in these troubled times. I thought particularly of our President's report to the Nation last Monday night. Let me recall a few lines from that speech. The President said: "Let us be united for peace. Let us also be united against defeat. Because -- let us understand -- North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that."

My friends, the President knows -- and I know -- and I am sure that each of you know -- that we must unite behind the President in his efforts to bring an honorable and lasting peace.

I speak of President Eisenhower today from my personal knowledge of him. I first met him in 1952 when I campaigned for him in his quest for the presidency. The last time I saw him was in January this year when I visited with him at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington. My friends, even in those sad weeks when we knew his time was near, he was interested and concerned and his advice was direct and incisive. As a professional leader he had no equal, but it is of the personal man I speak now.

Future historians will have no difficulty in understanding President Eisenhower's greatness. The facts are obvious. He was commander of one of the mightiest military forces of all time and under his leadership American armies achieved a series of spectacular victories that are unique in military history. With the silencing of the guns and the advent of peace, he turned his marvelous talent for leadership to forming an alliance for peace. He capped his brilliant career by leading his Nation through two terms in the highest office in the land. For eight years he led the Nation in peace, progress, prosperity and internal harmony. These achievements are enough to insure his place in history. Yet those of us who were privileged to have worked with him know there is more. His victories -- as magnificent as they were -- were surpassed by the spirit of the man himself.

To meet President Eisenhower was to trust him -- instinctively and immediately. This universal trust came from the realization that in this modest and kindly man, there could never be any conflict between obligation and personal ambition. His sense of duty -- his need to serve -- was so deeply ingrained and of such tremendous proportion -- that there was no room for selfishness. This decent humility was his mark. It warmed his greeting. It made people come to him. It shone through his smile.

And this remarkable modesty never left him. He was a professional military man but boasting was foreign to his nature. He was the world's hero yet he was uncomfortable in its adulation. He was the head of a great Nation of millions of people. Yet these his followers knew him not as the President. They called him -- and loved him -- as Ike. And "Ike" Eisenhower was at peace with these people as he was at peace with himself. Let us, then, honor his triumphs, but let us also honor his triumphant human spirit. He did not seek greatness -- but greatness sought him. If you will allow me a personal note, let me say that I shall always consider it a great honor to have known this man, to have worked with him, to have shared a moment of history with him.

The city of Anderson has done well to honor this great man here today. It is an honor that is deserved, an honor that is most appropriate.

I am delighted to be here with you, to share with you this day of tribute.

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