

rose to the challenge and served our country proud.

Our heartfelt prayers and sympathies are with Jonathan's family and friends during their time of great loss. We will always remember his bravery and the sacrifice he made while serving our nation.

CONGRATULATING THE WILKES-BARRE FINE ARTS FIESTA ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

**HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 18, 2005*

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today ask you and my esteemed colleagues in the House of Representatives to pay tribute to the Fine Arts Fiesta in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, which is celebrating 50 years of artistic and cultural presentation to the citizens of northeastern Pennsylvania.

Founded in 1956 under the leadership of Annette Evans, Ruth Schooley and Alfred Groh, the Fine Arts Fiesta is the oldest full-scale arts festival in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Making the event even more special is the fact that it has never charged the public for admission, preferring to make the event open to anyone, regardless of ability to pay. Instead, the Fine Arts Fiesta, always held on Wilkes-Barre's historic Public Square, has managed to fund itself through state grants and voluntary contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations.

Throughout its history, the Fine Arts Fiesta has always highlighted children's entertainment.

At noon on May 24, 1956, then Mayor Luther M. Kniffen sounded the Old Ship Zion bell and the Fine Arts Fiesta was born. It was also a highlight of Wilkes-Barre's Sesquicentennial that was being observed in 1956.

Dr. Eugene S. Farley, then president of Wilkes College, offered remarks and stressed the interrelation between the Wyoming Valley's cultural assets and the economic and industrial well being of the community. He concluded that the Fiesta plays a significant role in the overall growth of the community.

By 1962, the Fine Arts Fiesta had grown to include 36 organizations. More than 1,000 volunteers were working to present artistic displays from virtually every art and craft.

In 1963, Mrs. C. Wells Belin, of Scranton, a leader in the local art world, delivered the Fiesta's opening address. She spoke of the "four great assets of Fiesta." She went on to describe those assets as "public relations value . . . positive example for other cities . . . importance to industries already here and those planning to come here and, finally, as a way of helping people broaden their horizons and appreciation of culture and the arts.

Also in 1963, The Fine Arts Fiesta gained national recognition after George Ralston, chairman of the Wilkes-Barre Recreation Board, nominated the Fiesta for an award from the National Recreation Committee. That award was presented to Fiesta founder Annette Evans in the presence of the late U.S. Congressman Daniel J. Flood.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating The Fine Arts Fiesta on a half century

of cultural service to the citizens of north-eastern Pennsylvania and beyond, some of whom travel great distances to attend and enjoy the Fiesta. Clearly, the Fiesta has enriched the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and our community is a far better place because of it.

DEDICATION OF THE CONGRESSMAN IKE SKELTON BRIDGE

**HON. EMANUEL CLEAVER**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 18, 2005*

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that Highway 13 Missouri River Bridge has been named for my good friend, and fellow Missourian, The Honorable Ike Skelton. The dedication ceremony took place on May 14, 2005, in Lexington, Missouri, Mr. Skelton's hometown. I know that all the Members of the House will join me in congratulating Mr. Skelton on this honor. Mr. Skelton's remarks at the event are set forth as follows:

Thank you so much, Joe Aull, for your generous introduction. Members of the Missouri General Assembly, Ray and Lafayette County neighbors, and my fellow Missourians.

Today, we dedicate an engineering feat—the magnificent new bridge across the wide Missouri. What an opportunity to kindle pride in our community and pride in our state. This is truly a moment to remember.

Anyone who lives around here or who travels along this portion of Highway 13 can testify that for years people have asked, "when are we going to get a new bridge?" More recently the question has changed to, "when is that new bridge going to open?" So believe me, I think it is impossible to exaggerate what a very happy day this is for those who have waited so long for this day to arrive.

According to the Roman orator Cicero, the greatest of all virtues is gratitude. And, I want to express my gratitude to my neighbors, the members of the Highway 13 Missouri River Bridge Dedication Steering Committee, the members of the Missouri Department of Transportation, and the members of Missouri's General Assembly for the naming of this bridge. Most of all, I am grateful to my wife, Susie, for her tireless support that allows me to carry out my public service. I must add that I am pleased that so many of my high school graduating class are with us today.

I acknowledge this honor with a deep sense of humility. Representing Missourians is such a privilege, as I have had a love affair with the State of Missouri all my life. Suffice it to say that I will endeavor, in the days and years ahead, to merit this high honor.

This day opens a notable chapter in the history of Ray and Lafayette Counties, and in the history of our State. The taxpayers generously paid for the bridge and the surrounding roads, with the politicians and government officials setting aside the money—almost \$53 million in Federal and State funds for the bridge itself. But the achievement lies in the skill of the designers, engineers, and laborers whose work translated our dream of a new bridge into reality, providing us with a safe way to travel and taking us into the future, across the wide Missouri.

But because this is such a momentous day, it is appropriate to look back and reflect on the previous chapters of our history that led

us to this place today. This is a bridge over truly historic waters—the wide Missouri.

The river is central to the history of those who have lived in this region. The Indians who lived along its banks inspired the river's name. The word "Missouri" is believed to have derived from the Indian word for "canoe", and the Missouri Tribe were known as the "people of the wooden canoe."

French trappers encountered the Missouri Indians in the late 1600s in present day Saline County. Another native group, the Little Osage, lived in this area during the 1700s. Scholars say that both tribes used the river for transportation and trade with the Europeans.

In addition to the heritage of the Indians who made their home along the river, the legacy of the French trappers endures. The names the French gave to the tributaries that flow into the Missouri River still adorn our maps: Tabeau Creek, the Lamine River, Chouteau Creek, and the Moreau River.

After the fledgling United States of America purchased the Louisiana territory, Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery traveled these waters, following the river across the continent. In fact, our new bridge is quite near the spot in present-day Ray County where Lewis and Clark's party of explorers made camp in June 1804.

Fifteen years later in 1819, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expedition to explore the Missouri River and its tributaries demonstrated the potential usefulness of the river for the movement of goods, settlers, and troops. It also led to the Corps' assignment to tame the river for navigation, removing the treacherous snags that endangered boats and steamboats.

The Missouri artist George Caleb Bingham immortalized the jolly flatboatmen who plied the waters of this river as the frontier opened in the early to mid-1800s. The flatboatmen were known for their songs, their chanties, including the beautiful and haunting American folk song, Shenandoah. The now-familiar boatmen's song, which told of a trader who loved the daughter of Indian Chief Shenandoah, made its way down the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers to the American clipper ships, and thus around the world.

In the years to come, steamboats made the river their home. From about 1819 to 1881, steamboats paddled the river, taking settlers west and carrying trade goods and merchandise. Lexington became a major steamboat port, where manufactured goods from St. Louis and other points east were unloaded, and raw materials were loaded to travel down river.

Local shores witnessed one of the darkest days of the steamboat era when the steamboat Saluda called on the Port of Lexington in 1852. Encountering problems with the river's current and heavy running ice, the Saluda's boilers exploded and more than 200 passengers and crew perished.

During the War Between the States, steamboats carried troops and acted as armed transports, patrolling the river for Confederates attempting to cross the wide Missouri.

In the days before a bridge crossed the wide Missouri here, ferries enjoyed brisk business. The first ferry was established in 1819 by Lexington's founder, Gilead Rupe. Both the steamboat and the ferry operations lost customers as railroads began to lay their tracks throughout the west, but the ferry business held on, providing river crossing services until the opening of the bridge in 1925.

Attempts to bridge the river between Lafayette and Ray Counties were made in 1889 and 1894, before what we now call the "old bridge" was built across the wide Missouri.