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Memorial address on the Late Burnet R. Maybank before the National Rivers and Harbors Congress

Strom Thurmond

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I am truly grateful for the privilege of paying tribute today to the late Burnet R. Maybank.

Senator Maybank was appointed vice president from South Carolina to the National Rivers and Harbors Congress back in 1935. At that time he was mayor of the City of Charleston, but he continued to serve as the chief South Carolina representative to this body until his untimely death last fall. He continued in his active interest and participation in rivers and harbors affairs during his tenure as Governor of South Carolina and during his many years of service in the United States Senate. Because of the experience and associations gained from serving as the chief South Carolina representative to your organization, Senator Maybank was admirably equipped to assume a role of active leadership in sponsoring and supporting rivers and harbors measures before the Congress.

I can attest personally to the outstanding work he performed in behalf of such great projects as Santee-Cooper, Clark Hill, the entire Savannah River Development Project, the Beaufort and Charleston harbors and port authorities projects, as well as related REA and soil conservation activities. Of course, his efforts in this field were not confined to projects that affected only South Carolina, but were applied effectively in behalf of water and soil conservation projects and rivers and harbors affairs in every part of the country. To him these labors were love's labors: one might say that he had a special aptitude for
such work, but I think that the real explanation for his dedication to this particular field of legislation lies in the fact that to him these various projects were affairs of the heart, and when a man of his ability brought to bear the combined force of his intellect and his emotions, he could not fail to be successful.

Senator Maybank had the unique ability to project himself into every situation in which he found himself, and he involved himself intimately in every project he worked on. The warm, genuine interest he had in people was a very real emotion, completely free of hypocrisy. This warmth he exhibited was contagious and invariably had a strong, persuasive effect on others. Even those who opposed him were affected, and whenever they could they responded in kind by seeking for—and usually finding—some common ground on which they could give him at least a part of what he asked.

Whenever men exhibit outstanding ability or character, we are inclined to speculate and wonder what accounts for such qualities. We are all aware of the influence family and friends have on the development of character, but I sometimes think we tend to overlook the effect of such things as land and water—and the love of land and water—have on the development of personality. Perhaps, though, those of you who have devoted much of your lives to the affairs of rivers and harbors will understand what I am trying to say.

Senator Maybank was reared in the low country of South Carolina, and there in that beautiful region around Charleston he grew
to know and love the deep, peaceful rhythms of wind and water. There he watched the Ashley and Cooper Rivers emptying into Charleston harbor. There he grew to love the sound of wind and wave along the Southern coast.

There is a certain peculiar majesty about silent, deep-flowing waters; we are immediately aware of unseen power and mystery when we look out over a large body of water—be it an ocean, a lake, a large river, or a great harbor holding the commercial ships of many nations. All these influences worked on Burnet Maybank during his impressionable and formative years, and the strength of personality and character Senator Maybank showed during his career is due, in part, I think, to the effect these influences had. Certainly, they account in large measure for his life-long interest in this sphere of activity.

Senator Maybank was a versatile legislator, but no matter how broad a person's interests become there are certain things close to the heart that receive the special loving devotion that such things by their very nature inspire. Burnet Maybank loved South Carolina, and especially the low country. Therefore, it was only natural that he took such a continuing interest in the promotion and development of the great public power projects whose success are living memorials to his efforts.

You here today have special reason to join me in paying tribute to this man. For many years he worked with you and for you and he did his work well. May his example continue to be an inspiration to all of us. Others will take up where he left off, but Burnet Maybank will not be forgotten.

THE END