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Press Release

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[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge Turns 75

The Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge, which helped turn an isolated area into a key recreational destination in the city and sparked the growth of the Rockaways, is celebrating its diamond jubilee.

The bridge, connecting the borough of Brooklyn from the southern end of Flatbush Avenue to Jacob Riis Park in Queens, opened to traffic on July 3, 1937. It was the linchpin in a plan to turn Jamaica Bay and the Rockaway peninsula into the city's newest recreational and residential community, and to connect the area to the new Belt Parkway roadway system.

"For 75 years this bridge has brought people to new homes, helped them commute to work, deliver goods, grow their small businesses, and allowed millions to experience the joy of cool ocean breezes but most of all it has helped expand and strengthen the communities it continues to serve," said MTA Chairman and Chief Executive Joseph Lhota.

The bridge's diamond jubilee will be celebrated with the opening of an exhibit of historic photographs from the Bridges and Tunnels Special Archive collection at the Queens Public Library's Seaside branch on **July 3rd**. The exhibit will be on view weekdays at the library and on weekends at the Rockaway Artists Alliance at the Rockaway Center for the Arts in Fort Tilden throughout July. The Greater Astoria Historical Society, in conjunction with Bridges and Tunnels, will also conduct a walking tour along the bridge's pedestrian path on **July 7th**.

"We hope the community and visitors to the Rockaways will take the opportunity to view these historic photos that give a glimpse back to the roots of what are now some of New York City's most vibrant communities," said MTA Bridges and Tunnels President Jim Ferrara.

At 3,840 feet from end to end, the Marine Parkway Bridge was the longest vertical lift span for vehicular traffic in the world when built, and remains the longest in North America today.

The center lift span, which rises to 145 feet above water when lifted, is raised more than 100 times a year to accommodate marine traffic traveling between Jamaica Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, including both the Space Shuttle Enterprise and the British Airways Concorde which were floated on barges beneath the bridge (the Enterprise on June 3, 2012, and the Concorde in 2008) en route to their permanent home at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum.

The whimsical steel towers that curl toward each other makes it stand out from other vertical lift spans of its era, which had a heavy, utilitarian appearance. The same engineer/architect team that worked on the Henry Hudson Bridge, Madigan-Hyland with Emil H. Praeger serving as Chief Engineer, designed and carried out the plans for Marine Parkway.

Contractor crews from American Bridge Company, of Pennsylvania, worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week to comply with Moses' edict to have the bridge opened in time for July Fourth. They beat the deadline by a day and the bridge opened with a flurry of activity. A 500-car motorcade led by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia and City Parks Commissioner Robert Moses was supposed to be the first to cross the bridge but 15 minutes before the ceremony started fire trucks from Brooklyn en route to a five-alarm fire in Rockaway Beach raced across the span.

In 1978, the name of hometown hero Gil Hodges was added to the bridge, honoring the Brooklyn Dodgers first baseman and World Champion New York Mets manager, who lived in Brooklyn during his playing years.

The bridge has a total of 45 employees, including Maintenance and Operations supervisors, Lieutenants, Sergeants, Bridge and Tunnel Officers and support staff. Bridge Operations is run by Director of Bridges South William McCann. Facility Engineer Adrian Moshe oversees a staff of four Engineers, who are responsible for planning and overseeing long-term Capital projects.

Five Things About Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Bridge:

- 1937 toll was a dime. Today it's \$1.80 with E-ZPass and \$3.25 for cash.
- 1938 total traffic nearly 1.9 million. In 2011, yearly traffic was 7.6 million.
- Total cost to build the bridge was nearly \$6 million.
- Traffic increases 50 percent in summer months, thanks to beachgoers.

The Marine Parkway Authority, tasked by the State Legislature with building the bridge, had one member - Robert Moses.

