



In 1952, Charles Kemmons Wilson built his first Holiday Inn motel in Memphis, Tenn. With Wilson's successful overnight stay formula, Holiday Inns began staking claims throughout the Midwest. During this time, Joplin waited patiently to be the next location for this thriving motel chain. Joplin was rewarded in October of 1957 when three days were set aside for the grand opening of a Holiday Inn at 2600 Range Line.

New York Yankee legend Mickey Mantle wrote a book in 1985 recalling his involvement with the Joplin motel. In his book, *The Mick*, Mantle said he and local businessman, friend and financial adviser Harold Youngman “formed a corporation, sold stock to some of his wealthy friends, and gave me 25 percent of a motel he was building in Joplin at the end of the

Oklahoma turnpike. We called it Mickey Mantle's Holiday Inn. I paid 5 cents a share for my stock.”

The original Mickey Mantle's Holiday Inn contained 53 guest rooms. The \$500,000 motor lodge offered a slew of amenities including a “pleasure-eating” restaurant, a meeting room for 150 to 175 people, and a \$15,000, 55,000-gallon swimming pool. Also in the plan was an intimate lounge known as the Dugout Club. This became Joplin's first sports bar. The lounge offered soft lighting, small round tables, and the walls were lined with sports memorabilia. The sports theme was further enhanced with some outstanding artifacts from Mickey Mantle himself.

The Joplin Globe reported that two display cases were constructed just for Mantle's awards. One case contained the 1956 Hickok Professional Athlete of the Year Award. Valued at over \$10,000, this impressive alligator-skin belt was accompanied by a solid gold buckle, a four-carat diamond and 26 gem chips. In addition, the case contained a silver bat for winning the batting championship in 1956, and a 600-foot tape measure that was given to Mantle for hitting a 585-foot home run at Washington, in May of 1956. The other showcase exhibited a silver cup from The Associated Press for Athlete of the Year in 1956, and the ball from his 1,000th hit dated July 2, 1957.

Additionally, the motel offered bonded baby sitters, house physicians, room service, valet service, 24-hour switchboard service, bellhop service and free advance teletype reservation service. The Holiday Inn and American Hotel Association credit card system was in place, which enabled all room, food and beverage bills to be charged to the individual's room. Each guest room had its own radio, telephone, 21-inch television and a private all-tile bath with a sliding glass door.

After months of construction and much anticipation, grand opening ceremonies began at 3 p.m. Oct. 18. Tom DeArman, manager of the Joplin Chamber of Commerce, acted as master of ceremonies. Joplin Mayor Freeman Johnson, as well as D.D. Stokes of Gideon International, who presented Bibles to the new motor inn, were present for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Mantle and several of his baseball colleagues — New York Yankees pitcher Whitey Ford, Yankees outfielder Hank Bauer, Kansas City Athletics pitcher Ralph Terry and Milwaukee Braves 21-game winner and recent World Series champion Warren Spahn — were also part of the celebration.

Door prizes such as autographed baseballs from the New York Yankees along with free gift

certificates for dinners at the restaurant were given out randomly throughout the day. Lucky dinner winners looked forward to chef Cal Holden's specialty known as the "Flaming Shish Kebab" served at the table in dramatic fashion on flaming swords.

Although the Holiday Inn was the first franchise motel on Range Line, it was not the first motel on the street. The 1957, the Joplin city directory listed four other properties: The LaSiesta, Twin Oaks, Elms and Rancho all provided refuge to travelers as well. It is interesting to note that businesses did not dominate the landscape during this period. Of the 41 structures listed in the directory from 20th Street to 32nd Street, 19 of them were family residences.

Mickey Mantle and Harold Youngman stayed connected with the Holiday Inn corporation until the mid-1960s. Mantle later clarified the relationship in his book, stating, "We ran the motel eight years, then turned it over to a group of investors from New York, making a substantial profit. I collected \$100,000 down, in addition to a payment plan of \$1,000 a month over the next 20 years."

The Holiday Inn franchise stayed at the 2600 Range Line location until 1980. Today, the Lowe's Home Improvement warehouse occupies the former Mickey Mantle's Holiday Inn site. [Brad Belk: Mantle hit home run with Joplin motel, https://www.joplinglobe.com/news/local_news/brad-belk-mantle-hit-home-run-with-joplin-motel/article_d09d9ed9-e9d2-5551-b978-88dd16622e9d.html]

