his leg. He did not go to the hospital until the next morning when his platoon leader forced him to go. He was later awarded the Silver Star for his efforts.

A few months later, stationed near Besancon, France, Maxwell and three other soldiers, armed only with .45 caliber automatic pistols, defended their battalion observation post against a nearly overwhelming attack by enemy infantrymen. Despite fire from automatic weapons and grenade launchers, the men aggressively fought off advancing enemy troops and, with his calmness, tenacity, and fortitude, Maxwell inspired his fellows to continue the struggle. When an enemy hand grenade was thrown in the midst of his squad, Maxwell unhesitatingly threw himself squarely upon it, using his blanket and his unprotected body to absorb the full force of the explosion.

For this action, Maxwell was awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award. In addition, while serving with the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry of the United States Army, he was awarded two Purple Hearts, two Silver Stars, and a Bronze Star. Maxwell was honorably discharged from military service at Ft. Lewis, Washington June 13, 1945.

After moving to Oregon, Maxwell met his wife Beatrice—Bea—and they married on August 12, 1951. He and Bea are parents to four children, numerous grandchildren, and a great-grandchild. Bob spent 30 years further serving the public in the teaching profession.

For his selfless service to others, and to the United States in times of war, I salute Bob Maxwell as an Oregon Veteran Hero.

SALUTE TO AN OREGON SOLDIER

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, today I rise to honor a courageous Oregonian who rushed to save the life of a wounded Taliban fighter. Sergeant Dan Trackwell, a native of Klamath Falls, OR, and a member of the Combined Anti-Armor Team, is currently serving in Afghanistan helping to secure that country's future.

On June 13, 2004, Marines with Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 6th Marines and Afghan Militia Forces engaged three enemy soldiers on a mountain side. The guerillas were tracking and reporting on the Battalion Landing Team's activities when coalition forces opened fire and wounded at least one of them.

The Marines used a high-powered optical sight to observe the enemy fighters and to confirm that one was indeed wounded. As the other Taliban fighters escaped into the mountains the wounded man was left for dead.

Sergeant Dan Trackwell was one of the four Marines who ventured up the mountain to find the enemy. They located him hiding behind a rock. He and Corporal Jesse Clingan, of Unitown, Pennsylvania, determined that the fighter had lost a lot of blood and appeared to be in severe pain.

Corporal Daniel Dimaso, of Junction, NY, stripped off his own t-shirt and made a tourniquet to control the bleeding from the gunshot wound on the enemy fighter's lower left leg, while Pvt. 1st Class Daniel Fondonella, of Mt. Vernon, NY, provided security. Two hours earlier these men were hunting him down and now they were hurrying to save his life.

The Marines knew that the Taliban fighter would die if they did not get him off the mountain. They gathered the injured man and signaled for the corpsman at the vehicles in the canyon to prepare for their arrival. Sergeant Trackwell carried the enemy soldier down the mountain.

The wounded man was then taken to the battalion's command post, where the surgeon, Navy Lt. Brendon Drew, determined that he needed surgery soon. The Marines were instructed to keep an eye on the patient to ensure that he did not fall asleep while the wound was being worked on. As the surgeons worked on the patient, the Marines took turns holding the man's IV bag and blocking the bright Afghan sun from his eyes.

After the patient was stabilized he was taken to a nearby military medical facility for recovery. Lt. Drew determined that it was the immediate medical attention and the quick intervention from the corpsman that saved the man's life.

This story shows us that our Marines not only follow the rules of combat, they display a deep respect for humanity. For his selfless services to others, and to the United States in time of war, I salute Sergeant Dan Trackwell.

ABSENCE EXPLANATION

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I regret that I was unable to participate in many of the important votes that took place on Wednesday, June 23, 2004. I was necessarily absent from the Senate yesterday as I was attending the funeral of a family member. Nevertheless, I believe it is important for my constituents in Kansas to know how I would have voted had I been here; thus, I indicated to the Majority Leader my position for each of the votes throughout the day.

TRIBUTE TO MATTIE STEPANEK

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask the United States Senate to join me in tribute to Mattie Stepanek, a young man who accomplished so much, and sadly, was taken from us this past Tuesday, June 22 at the age of 13 years. Like his three older siblings, Mattie died from complications of a rare form of muscular dystrophy.

As anyone can testify who has seen Mattie on television, he was one brilliant person, and he had a big heart to match. At the age of three, he began writing poetry to cope with the death of his brother, writing messages of hope and inspiration, and selling millions of books. Mattie quickly became one of the most widely read poets in recent memory, and three of his volumes were on the New York Times' best-seller list.

I would like to share one of Mattie's most inspirational poems. It is titled, ''On Being a Champion.''

''A champion is a winner,
A hero . . .
Someone who never gives up
Even when the going gets rough.
A champion is a member of
A winning team . . .
Someone who overcomes challenges
Even when it requires creative solutions
A champion is an optimist,
A hopeful spirit . . .
Someone who plays the game,
Even when the game is called life . . .
Especially when the game is called life.
There can be a champion in each of us,
If we live as a winner,
If we live as a member of the team,
If we live with a hopeful spirit,
For life.''

Mattie was a champion in every sense of the word and his poetry won the hearts of many admirers, from Oprah Winfrey to former President Carter. But famous or not, it seemed to matter little to Mattie, who said, ''It's our inner beauty, our message, the songs in our hearts.''

Mattie embodied the unlimited potential within all of us, and I hope that Mattie's mother, Judi Stepanek, will find some strength in knowing that Mattie inspired and touched so many people. We offer Judi a special place in our hearts, knowing there is nothing harder than losing a child. And we pray that she be given the strength, courage and wisdom needed to get through this difficult time.

Mattie believed his mission in life was to ''spread peace in the world.'' And, today, I say to Mattie and to all who loved him: Mission accomplished.

AGRICULTURAL ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2004

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague, Senator CONRAD, in introducing legislation that provides much needed relief to farmers and ranchers who have been devastated by weather conditions.

Farmers and ranchers from my state began the year with great optimism. Producers were eager to get their crop in the ground so they could get a good return on their investments and their hard work.

But, harsh weather conditions have plagued our state. In some regions of North Dakota, late snow followed by unusually high rainfall left much of our fields under water and unfit to plant. Preliminary reports estimate that as much as two million acres of crops were unable to be planted or had crops that were destroyed after planting. This has placed the livelihood of many North Dakota producers in serious jeopardy.

In the southwest portion of the state, the drought conditions have crippled