

tribute to Andre. It is written by Tinisha Tolber of Galloway, OH:

Though fallen, you are not forgotten.

Remembered . . .

In every American flag across the Nation.

In every tear that your battle brothers cry. And, although freedom is supposed to be free, you have paid the ultimate price for the people like me.

The government rewards you with a flag and a Purple Heart, but we pray for your families that have been torn apart.

Rest in peace, Dray, knowing you are remembered always.

Mr. President, Andre leaves behind a loving family to cherish his memory: parents Mary and Robert; siblings Josh, Kevin, Rob, Robert, Brian, Robyn, and Roshonda; ex-wife Kirsten and children, Lea Lea and Dominique Juan. My wife Fran and I continue to keep them in our thoughts and prayers.

MARINE LANCE CORPORAL NICHOLAS B. ERDY

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a valiant, young, Williamsburg, OH, Marine named LCpl Nicholas B. Erdy, who was killed in Iraq on May 11, 2005. He was 21 years old.

A 2002 graduate of McNicholas High School, Nicholas—Nick to family and friends—was dearly loved by all who knew him. They say that Nick was special—that he was courageous, that he never complained, and that he had a knack for making his friends and family laugh. He also just loved being a Marine.

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A movie buff who loved his "muscle" car, Nick had always wanted to be in the military. He built forts as a child and read books on weapons and war strategies. His high school football coach, John Rodenberg, said that "Nick was a great kid, really focused on everything he was doing. . . . He [always] had a plan. He knew he wanted to go into the armed forces. He was focused on serving his country."

Indeed, Nick was unfalteringly devoted to the Marines and to our country. Even his favorite holiday, not surprisingly, was the Fourth of July. Nick joined the Marines after graduation in 2002 and was in Iraq by March 2005.

He was killed on May 11, 2005, when his armored vehicle hit a land mine.

After Nick's death, family friend and former football coach, Patrick McCracken, reminisced about Nick, whom he first met when Nick was, as he put it, a "spindly-legged, somewhat awkward" seventh-grade football player with the Titans football team. During one game, the Titans were losing 46-to-0 at halftime when Coach McCracken decided to put Nick in the game and see if he could turn things around.

He said Nick was calm, in control, and flawless. "I'd stare straight into his eyes . . . expecting perfection out of a seventh-grade, eighth-grade kid—and I got it."

On an Internet tribute website for Nick, Coach McCracken wrote a heartfelt letter to him shortly after Nick was killed. This is what he wrote:

Dear Nick:

We have started football. I think of you every day. . . . You make me so proud. I need to find some quarterback who knows all my crazy signals like you did. I think we may have a couple. These new Titans are great kids, just like you. You are always in my heart. I promise to help take care of your mom, dad, Erin, Ashley, and other family members when they need it. I wish I was half the Marine you and the other guys are.

We owe so much to you guys. We will stay strong for you. What is a Titan? He is a Marine—he is Nick Erdy. I love you, Semper Fi.

Mr. President, when Nick's body was brought home, the funeral procession—stretching two dozen vehicles long—passed under an arch formed by two ladder trucks from the Miami Township and Goshen fire departments. As the hearse rolled by, hundreds of people clapped and waved American flags. Elizabeth Hoskins, of Milford, was holding a homemade sign that read simply, "Nick's Our Hero."

Andrew Clements watched the funeral procession, as well. Though he never met Nick, he was touched by him and had this to say:

I never had the privilege of meeting Nick, but over the past few days I feel like I have. He's simply a hero to everyone. I stood outside McNicholas High School while Nick's funeral was happening. The faces on the people said it all. Nick Erdy will never be forgotten.

Father Pat Crone of St. Xavier Catholic Church described well Nick's selfless nature and how his life made a difference to so many in so many ways. This is what he said:

Nick is a blessing. We can celebrate this life, because it so important—because Nick was doing things so important. Freedom is important. A young man, who could have stayed back here with all the blessings of this country, decided to go and spread those blessings to those less gifted and lucky than us.

A resolution by the Ohio House of Representatives aptly tells us about Nick's life by stating:

It is certain the world is a better place, his having been in it.

Without question, the world is a better place for Nicholas Erdy having been in it. Nick was the model of what we all hope our children will become. He was a young man with a sparking personality, a wonderful sense of humor, a compassion for others, and a dedication to his country.

A friend named Martin wrote the following in tribute to Nick and Dustin Derga, a fellow Ohio marine and friend of both, who was killed in Iraq three days before Nick:

Derga and Erdy were the first guys I got to know when I joined the unit. They were all about having fun and enjoying life. Even in Iraq they seemed to make the worst situations turn into great ones. Their character is what made our platoon what it was. We were full of jokes, laughter, and memorable experiences. 1st platoon will never be the same without them and the others we lost. They were great guys, and they will be remembered in our hearts forever.

Nick was very proud of what they were doing overseas. However, his zeal for the military was tempered by his desire to be home to start a family with his fiancée and high-school sweetheart Ashley Boots. On December 29, 2004, a week before his unit left Columbus for training in California, Nick proposed to Ashley. They made plans to wed this past November, sometime after Nick's expected return.

Another plan following Nick's return was to go to Disney World with Ashley, fellow Marine Dustin Derga, and Dustin's girlfriend Kristin. In anticipation of the vacation, they had flipped through brochures and even watched a promotional Disney DVD. Back home in Ohio, their girlfriends couldn't wait for the trip. Ashley said that they just wanted to go someplace fun and relax. Tragically, these plans were never realized.

Dustin's girlfriend Kristin wrote the following to Nick:

Hey buddy . . . I miss you. . . . I wish that I could be greeting you on Thursday so you, Ash, Dustin, and I could go to Disney. . . . It would have been so great . . . but you did your job. . . . You got your friends home safely and laid to rest as a hero. . . . You are a hero Nicholas Erdy—and we love and miss you every day. . . . You just better make sure Dustin is being good up there!

Yes, Mr. President, Nick Erdy and Dustin Derga are certainly both American heroes.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep Nick's parents Jane and Bill, his sister Erin, his fiancée Ashley, and the rest of his family in our thoughts and in our prayers.

THREE DECADES OF WATER LEADERSHIP

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, today is a significant day in the agriculture industry in southeast Idaho. Effective and judicious water management is critical to communities in Idaho. Allocation of this scarce resource, particularly in the extended drought over much of the last decade, requires a vision of the future, application of valuable experience and lessons learned in the past, and an appreciation of the wide spectrum of water users. Today, Ron Carlson, Snake River Watermaster of District No. 1, is retiring after over 30 years of service to southeast Idaho.

Ron revolutionized irrigated agriculture in Idaho, bringing it into the 20th century with the introduction of computerized accounting and data collection in 1978 and the creation of the Water Bank, a formal water renting process. Ron ushered in technological advances into irrigated agriculture that gave water administrators the capability to create a model of river flows and reservoir capacity that compares baselines of yearly conditions. This system allowed for unprecedented river management and water supply projections for the Snake River system in Idaho. Ron's extensive knowledge and wisdom has helped maintain a critical balance between the multiple demands on this system by all legitimate

water users, from tribes to the State to local entities.

Ron not only has dedicated his life to managing critical natural resources in southeast Idaho, he has also carried on the tradition of his parents in reaching out caring arms to disadvantaged youth. It is this calling that he intends to pursue in retirement, managing the Pearl House Project in Idaho Falls, a full-service residential youth center for children in crisis. I am certain that his vast management knowledge gained from years as watermaster will serve him well in this endeavor. I congratulate Ron and his family on his retirement and wish him well. Idaho's agriculture community's loss is the youth of southeastern Idaho's gain.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, as Dean of the Senate Women, I rise on this day in Women's History Month to honor the unique contributions women have made to America since its beginning and to pay my respects to all the forgotten women who have served this country. Women's roles in history are often overlooked and undervalued. But we have shaped, and continue to shape, society—not only in terms of battles fought and won—but through great social movements.

Women were the driving force behind the abolitionists, who helped end slavery and fought for the fourteenth amendment. And, of course, women led the suffragist movement, which sought to curb domestic violence by ending drinking and gave women control of their lives with the right to vote. The list goes on and on—and it is still growing.

Last month, we said goodbye to a true pioneer for women's rights—Betty Friedan. Ms. Friedan opened Americans' minds to the possibility of a new role for women in our country with her book, "The Feminine Mystique." She provided the spark in 1963 to launch another movement for women's rights. And she kept that fire going—dedicating her life to fighting for equality, founding the National Organization for Women and NARAL, and cofounding the National Women's Political Caucus with Gloria Steinem and myself.

Last month, Maryland and the world also said hello to another female star in her own right—Kimmie Meissner of Bel Air, MD, who took sixth place in Olympic women's figure skating. Every March, we point to those women who have come before us and who have paved the way for current advances, but it is only right and proper that we also salute the ones who are making history as we speak and inspiring other young women to follow their dreams. This year, we salute Kimmie Meissner and the honor she brought Maryland and our great Nation with her talent, skills and sportsmanship.

The passion that inspired both of these women is the same that helped me to realize my own dreams—giving

me the courage to break the glass ceiling as a social worker, a Baltimore City councilwoman, a U.S. Congresswoman and now as a U.S. Senator. That is why I sponsored legislation as a Congresswoman in 1981 to establish a Women's History Week and then in the Senate to expand the observance into Women's History Month in 1987.

As the first Democratic woman elected to the Senate in her own right in 1986, I have seen the Senate women grow to the nine Democratic women Senators and 14 total women we have now. Today, I am Dean of the Senate Women—welcoming and guiding women Senators when they first take office and building coalitions to get things done once they are here.

Together, we have been working to add to the legacy of women's history, and every year during this month we are especially reminded of our ongoing fight for equality. Since 1992, women Senators have tripled funding for domestic violence shelters, increased funding for child care by 68 percent and small business lending to women by 86 percent. And we have passed such important legislation as the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and the Breast Cancer Research Stamp Act.

One of the issues that has been most important to me is women's health. When I first came to the Senate, women's health wasn't a national priority. But since then I have helped to establish an Office of Research on Women's Health at the National Institutes of Health, to increase women's involvement in clinical drug trials, and to increase funding for breast cancer research by 700 percent since 1992. I will continue to fight to make sure that women's health remains a priority in the Federal checkbook and that women are not left behind when it comes to their survival.

This year in the Senate I have also been fighting to save American workers' pensions. Women are more likely to have either lower pensions than men or no private pension at all. That is why it is so important to make sure their retirement is secure. And that is why I fought with my colleagues to improve retirement security for women by ensuring better survivor benefits and better rights for divorced women in the new pension legislation.

Because women are less likely to have these private pensions, make less money than men on average, and are more likely to work fewer years than men due to family responsibilities, Social Security is also of particular importance to us. Last year, I successfully fought to protect Social Security from privatization so that women and all people are guaranteed lifetime, inflation-proof Social Security. I truly believe that privatization of Social Security would have been a bad deal for women and would have increased poverty among them. Whether mothers are at home raising children or in the workplace, Social Security must re-

main a guaranteed benefit, not a guaranteed gamble. That is why I will continue to stand sentry to keep the 'security' in Social Security.

And I will continue fighting to close the wage gap between men and women. Women make this country run—we are business leaders, entrepreneurs, politicians, mothers and more. But even in 2006, women who work full-time year round earn only 76 cents for every \$1 their male counterpart makes.

There are many terrific accomplishments we have made and are continuing to make in the ongoing struggle for women's equality. I am so proud of the women who I serve with in the Senate and the work that we do, but I am reminded, especially during this month, that we can do more. Betty Friedan, Kimmie Meissner, and millions of women past and present serve as models for unwavering advocates for equality, justice, women and positive change. So during this Women's History Month I not only honor their courage and hard work, I vow to carry on their legacy.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

A PROUD TRADITION

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I would like to recognize two outstanding young Idahoans who are here this week, getting a little taste of what it is like to work in and around the U.S. Senate. In the top 1 percent of Idaho students, Kortnee Hurless and Tenaya Pina, both from Camas County High School, were selected to participate in the U.S. Senate Youth Program this week. Kortnee and Tenaya have been able to attend policy addresses by Members of this body as well as Cabinet members, officials from the Department of Defense, directors of various Federal agencies, and will meet with a Justice of the Supreme Court.

Kortnee and Tenaya were selected for this program because they have demonstrated superior achievement and leadership at school and in their community. Idaho is very proud of these young women. Vision, purpose, commitment to challenging goals such as Tenaya and Kortnee have shown do not typically remain hidden in the background. I wouldn't be surprised to hear their names in leadership roles in the not too distant future. Past graduates of this 44-year program include my colleague, the distinguished Senator SUSAN COLLINS from Maine, Presidential advisers, and former Lieutenant Governor of Idaho, David LeRoy. Tenaya and Courtney carry on a fine tradition of Idaho's involvement in the leadership of our country at the high school level. I congratulate them on this tremendous achievement. They are shining examples of the abilities and promise of Idaho's youth.●