

Mingma was the first Sherpa to become chief warden of Mt. Everest National Park. He was also one of the founders of the WWF-funded Annapurna Conservation Area Project—then a new experiment in community-based conservation that has since become a model for conservation around the world.

Carter Roberts, President and CEO of WWF-US said this week, “Mingma Sherpa’s quiet, unassuming modesty made it easy to forget that he helped to point the way for the rest of us to follow. He was a hero to me and to many others in the conservation field. He dedicated his life to the idea people and nature could, and should, co-exist. His death is a tremendous loss.”

Born on October 31, 1955, in the small mountain village of Kunde, Mingma was one of the first students to graduate from the village school system created by Hillary, who had scaled Everest two years earlier. Hillary took an immediate interest in the boy and in 1972, a year after Mingma’s father died, invited him to participate in a school-building project. It was to be a transformative experience—and one that led to a close, life-long friendship with “Sir Ed,” as Hillary was known among the Sherpas.

Attending Lincoln College in Christchurch, New Zealand, on a scholarship received with Hillary’s help, Mingma obtained a B.A. in forestry and park management and returned to Nepal as a junior ranger at Mt. Everest’s Sagarmatha National Park.

Tensions between park management and the sherpas living in the area were running high at the time because of community resentment over what were seen as arbitrary restrictions on tree cutting and other traditional activities. So successful was Mingma in resolving these disputes, through solutions that gave the community incentives to conserve the park, that he was named chief warden six months later.

It turned into one of the earliest experiments in what later would become known as “community-based conservation” and it worked so well that in 1985, after another sojourn abroad to obtain a Masters degree in resource management from the University of Manitoba, Mingma was picked to help create the Annapurna project that would later become the textbook model for community-based conservation.

He joined WWF in 1989, first as director of WWF Nepal’s Himalayan Program and later as chief country representative in Nepal and Bhutan. In 1998, he moved to the Washington, DC headquarters of WWF-US to oversee all of the organization’s conservation work in the Eastern Himalayas.

In “Sir Edmund Hillary and the People of Everest,” author Cynthia Russ Ramsay would later write that, of all of “Hillary’s students”—many of whom went on to become doctors, lawyers, teachers and businessmen—Mingma “more than anyone else embodies the virtues of doing things the Hillary way,” having taken his mentor’s compassionate vision applied it to many “other remote areas of the world.”

Although he received international recognition for his work—the Gorkha Dhaksin Bahu medal from the King of Nepal and the Order of the Golden Ark Award from Prince Bernard of the Netherlands—Mingma was forever self-effacing about his accomplishments, preferring to give credit to others. He could not escape fame in his native Nepal, however, where vil-

lagers would line the streets to applaud and cheer him whenever he returned for a visit.

He is survived by his wife Phurba Sona Sherpa, his daughter Dawa Phuti Sherpa and son Tenzing Norbu Sherpa, all of Falls Church, Virginia.

Mingma was one of seven WWF staff killed in the helicopter crash. Mathew Preece, a very promising young conservation professional from Utah, also died in the accident. Mr. Preece was a new Program Officer at WWF headquarters in Washington. He only joined WWF’s Eastern Himalayas team four months ago and was thrilled to be making his first trip to the region. Matt spent five years working on domestic and international issues for other non-profit organizations and lived in India, Chile, Costa Rica, Peru, Ecuador, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. He obtained graduate degrees in 2004 from Brandeis University in Sustainable International Development and in 1999 from Vanderbilt University in Environmental Science. While in school, Matt helped build houses with Habitat for Humanity in California and spent a month in Washington, DC as an advisor to the National Youth Leadership Forum.

Matthew Preece fit more into his 31 years than most people do in an entire lifetime. He is an inspiration to young people around the world, and our hearts go out to his parents, three sisters, and a brother.

The five other WWF staffers who were tragically killed are: Dr. Jill Bowling, Conservation Director for WWF-UK; Jennifer Headley, WWF-UK’s Coordinator for Nepal/South Asia Program; Dr. Chandra Prasad Gurung, Country Representative for WWF Nepal; Dr. Harka Gurung, Advisor to WWF Nepal; and Yeshi Choden Lama, Senior Program Officer for WWF Nepal.

Several senior Nepali government officials also perished in the crash. They are: Mr. Gopai Rai, Nepal Minister of State Forests and Soil Conservation; Dr. Damodar Parajuli, the Acting Secretary, Ministry of State of Forests and Soil Conservation; Mr. Narayan Poudel, Director General of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation; and Mr. Sharad Rai, Director General of Department of Forests.

On behalf of the 125 members of the International Conservation Caucus, I want to express our deepest sympathies to the families, friends, and colleagues of the conservationists and public servants who were lost to us. They were on a noble mission. All of them will be missed by people who care deeply as I do about protecting wildlife and wild places.

GREAT LAKES FISH AND WILDLIFE RESTORATION ACT OF 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES T. WALSH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Mr. WALSH. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2430, the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act of 2006. This is a strong, bi-partisan bill that deserves the support of all members.

As many of you know, my district is home to the Lake Ontario shoreline. From its recreational use to its natural beauty, Lake On-

tario directly affects a majority of my constituents.

Areas on Lake Ontario like the Sodus Bay Chimney Bluffs and Irondequoit Bay, to the various trout streams and wetland marshes, all shape the landscape of this unique area. But this diverse landscape and its ecosystem are in need of attention. All the Great Lakes are in need of repair. This legislation allows us to begin the much needed restoration of the Great Lakes.

Unfortunately, I must admit that nearly half of the original wetlands of the Great Lakes have been lost due to adverse threats like non-point source pollution and invasive species. These lost wetlands were the home to the sensitive ecosystem that is the building block of the larger Great Lakes basin. The basin is home to 1/5 of the earth’s fresh water and it commands our attention. This legislation helps get us there.

Lastly, this legislation is the first step in implementing the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration strategy that President Bush commissioned in 2004. Since that time, the findings and recommendations have been used to develop an all encompassing piece of legislation, H.R. 5100, the Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act. This bill includes a coordinated effort to clean up sewage treatment plants as well as the polluted waters and toxic waste water left over from the industrial boom of past generations. H.R. 5100 includes funding for permanent barriers to protect Lake Michigan and the basin from the invasive Asian Carp species.

Similar to our Nation’s successful efforts in the Everglades and the Chesapeake Bay, we must do the same for the Great Lakes. Congress must implement H.R. 5100, and the passage of S. 2430 is a critical first step.

Streams, rivers, marshes and wetlands all over the basin are polluted and in dire need of attention. We know that restoration, protection and conservation can restore the Great Lakes much like the Everglades and Chesapeake Bay. The fish and wildlife that call these areas home must be restored to protect the magnificence of the lakes for generations to come.

TRIBUTE TO THE GREAT SWAMP WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Great Swamp Watershed Association, based in Harding Township, Morris County, New Jersey, a vibrant community which I am proud to represent. On November 17, 2006, the Great Swamp Watershed Association will be celebrating 25 years of preserving land and water resources in over forty municipalities throughout New Jersey.

In 1981, the Great Swamp Watershed Association was formed to protect land and water and encourage good management policies and practices in the 36,000 acres in the watershed. The Association was formed by a group of citizens concerned about the potential development of a jet port where the refuge is currently located. Starting as a small grassroots organization, the Great Swamp Watershed Association has today grown to cover 55

square miles and serves thousands of households in over forty municipalities in New Jersey. Five streams in the watershed form the Passaic River, which provides drinking water for over a million New Jersey residents!

In 2002 the Great Swamp Watershed Association produced "Doing Water Right," a video and instruction manual to demonstrate the benefits and application of "blue-water" technologies in support of proposed state storm water regulations. The Association's programs have received local, regional and national awards.

The Great Swamp Watershed Association has preserved local streams, protected environmentally sensitive land threatened by development, and promoted environmental education for all age groups. The Association also is responsible for land advocacy and water quality testing within the watershed. Most of this work is done by a dedicated and devoted group of volunteers from across the area.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you and my colleagues to join me in congratulating the members of the Great Swamp Watershed Association on its 25th Anniversary.

INTRODUCTION OF "LET'S ALL PLAY DAY" RESOLUTION

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that there should be established a "Let's All Play Day."

I introduce this bill in support of the goals and ideals of Boundless Playgrounds. I would like to take this opportunity to share these goals and ideals with my colleagues in the House.

An estimated six million children in the United States have some type of chronic condition or disability that makes it hard or impossible for them to fully enjoy traditional playgrounds. Those who work with children with disabilities stress the importance of play in their development. Boundless Playgrounds differ from traditional playgrounds in the sense that these playgrounds, and the equipment within the playgrounds, are accessible to all children. They are barrier-free, inclusive and configured to support children's development. Perhaps most importantly, by encouraging children with and without disabilities to play together, these playgrounds provide a space to celebrate similarities and differences and develop essential life skills. I can think of no better way to combat stereotypes than to expose our children to others with disabilities at a young age.

Currently, there are more than 100 Boundless Playgrounds in twenty-one states, with more in development. In my own district, a Boundless Playground in Providence, Rhode Island provides many Rhode Island children and their family members the ability to interact and play together. I have been amazed and inspired by how the community has come together in support of this park—most notably the contributions of Hasbro, Inc. Such cooperation is a tremendous testament to Rhode Island's commitment to supporting children who struggle to overcome obstacles.

Mr. Speaker, we could all take a lesson from the forethought put into the design of Boundless Playgrounds. In the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other initiatives that have encouraged the inclusion of people with disabilities in their communities, I am proud to recognize Boundless Playgrounds for their dedication to all children and families. I hope my colleagues will join me in the effort to acknowledge these extraordinary playgrounds by cosponsoring this resolution.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I was recorded as having missed the vote on final passage of H.R. 6166, the Military Commissions Act. I was present during the vote and intended to support this measure; however, my vote was not recorded.

I would like the record to reflect that I would have voted "aye" on this measure.

THANKS TO SUBHASRI RAMANATHAN

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to give thanks to Sue Ramanathan, Democratic deputy staff director and chief counsel of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security.

Sue was one of the original staff members of the Select Committee on Homeland Security from the 108th Congress, and has been a dedicated public servant whose leadership on border security and immigration issues has helped us proficiently tackle those hard issues and whose counsel has been a vital element of our homeland security efforts.

Sue began her tenure on Capitol Hill as a legislative fellow for Senator JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN and as a member of the Washington, DC, staff of the American Bar Association before joining my colleague ZOE LOFGREN as her senior policy advisor and counsel. While working for Congresswoman LOFGREN, Sue earned an LL.M in international and comparative law from Georgetown University Law Center. It was on behalf of Congresswoman LOFGREN that Sue was able to contribute to the conversation surrounding our Nation's immigration policies, the same policies that she and her family were first subject to as immigrants to our great Nation. The Congresswoman joins me in commending Sue today, as demonstrated by her comments to follow.

She left the Hill for a brief period to work on a Presidential campaign, before returning in 2004 to join the Select Committee of Homeland Security under Ranking Member Jim Turner of Texas. At the beginning of this Congress, when I became ranking member, I named Sue chief counsel and deputy staff director. In addition to helping develop the legislative and oversight activities of the Demo-

cratic Committee staff, Sue also led our immigration and border security team efforts. In this capacity, Sue played a critical role in implementing the committee's legislative agenda.

Mr. Speaker, this was no small task.

One particular debate that I will not soon forget pertained to the House's consideration of comprehensive border security legislation this past year. Committee staff spent countless sleepless nights and early mornings working on behalf of the American people to mitigate the risk posed by this Nation's porous borders. Sue coordinated the committee's floor time on H.R. 4437, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005. In particular, she worked closely with my colleague SILVESTRE REYES on the Democratic motion to recommit. Mr. REYES had this to say about Sue, "as a member of Congress representing a district on the U.S.-Mexico border, my staff and I had the pleasure of working with Sue Ramanathan on several pieces of homeland security legislation in recent years. In every instance, I was impressed by her knowledge, professionalism, and dedication. Though we are sorry to see her leave the staff of the Homeland Security Committee, we are fortunate that she will continue to work on the many homeland security issues facing our country in her new position. We wish her all the best."

In addition, she was one of the committee's key staffers on the committee's first two authorization bills, as well as on legislation to correct and restructure the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Sue's expertise and dedication will be deeply missed in the House. I am comforted, however, by the fact that Sue's insight and expertise will not be lost to the Members of this House. Unlike so many others who turn in their congressional ID cards for large paychecks in the private sector, Sue has maintained her commitment to public service. Thankfully, she will remain a public servant, dedicating this new chapter in her career in the Homeland Security and Justice Division at the U.S. Government Accountability Office, GAO, and helping to ensure Congress's critical check and balance on the executive branch of Government. Mr. Speaker, I wish Sue, the committee's favorite Cherry Hill native and Rutgers graduate, the best in her new venture. I look forward to seeing great things from Sue and her new family at GAO as they, undoubtedly, work to ensure that America gets homeland security right once and for all.

15TH ANNIVERSARY OF AZERBAIJAN'S INDEPENDENCE

HON. ROBERT WEXLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 28, 2006

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Speaker, on October 18, 2006 Azerbaijan will celebrate the 15th Anniversary of its re-independence. As members of Congress recognize this important occasion, I think it is essential to point out the remarkable strength, determination and ingenuity of Azerbaijanis who have taken difficult steps to transform their country over the last 15 years.

One of the most significant developments contributing to Azerbaijan's transformation is