

Following his return from Vietnam, Michael met Patty Dolan, whom he married in July 1973. Michael and Patty would raise two sons, Michael Jr. and Brian. Eager to continue his service to our country after returning home, Michael joined the South Dakota Army National Guard 153rd Engineering Battalion in Huron, SD, in April 1973. Michael continued his service with the South Dakota Army National Guard until his discharge in April 1990. He joined the South Dakota Air National Guard in May 1990 and retired from military service in May 1992 after 23 dedicated years of service to his country.

In addition to serving his country for 23 years in the military, Michael has dedicated his life to the service of his fellow veterans in South Dakota. He is retiring after 24 years of service as a plumber at the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center. He is a lifelong member of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Vets, and the 101st Airborne Association.

Michael is a humble man. He is never one to flaunt his heroic actions, nor bring attention to his decorated military service. He would likely rather blend in the crowd with his fellow veterans than be singled out; however, on the occasion of his retirement from the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center, it is appropriate that he be publicly recognized. I commend Michael J. Fitzmaurice for his many years of dedicated service to the State of South Dakota and our nation. Michael, a grateful nation thanks you for your service. Best wishes on your retirement.●

TRIBUTE TO PETER HENRY

● Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the career of a dedicated public servant. Peter P. Henry is retiring as director of the Black Hills VA Health Care System in early July, concluding a career in Federal service that spans 41 years in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Peter has spent two lengthy stints at the helm of the Black Hills VA, totaling 16 years of service.

I commend Peter for his dedication, professionalism and steadfast commitment to veterans and their families. I have always appreciated the efforts of the men and women who work in the Black Hills VA Health Care System and exemplify the VA's "Veterans Come First" mission. Patient satisfaction numbers have remained high during Peter's leadership at the Black Hills VA, a testimony to the dedicated work of the staff and administrators at the Hot Springs and Fort Meade facilities.

Over his career, Peter has witnessed a number of changes in the VA system and has deftly guided and implemented these changes within the Black Hills VA. He worked to merge the Hot Springs VA and Fort Meade VA systems into one collective organization,

the Black Hills VA health care system. This action provided a number of challenges including condensing dual missions at two campuses into one mission spanning two facilities.

During his many years of service in the Black Hills, Peter has worked diligently to provide VA services to South Dakota veterans who would otherwise not receive such important care. The number of community based outreach clinics, CBOCs, in the Black Hills VA system has increased during Peter's tenure. Veterans living in rural and reservation areas of South Dakota have much better access to VA health care and specialty services through the CBOCs. The needs of rural and reservation veterans must continue to be addressed so that access to quality VA care is preserved and maintained.

In 1995, Peter provided key leadership with the opening of the Rapid City Community Based Outreach Clinic, CBOC, at a small facility on the South Dakota National Guard's Camp Rapid campus. In a joint agreement between the Guard and the VA, veterans in Rapid City were able to save on mileage and receive routine levels of care. It wasn't long before VA officials realized that the facility was too small to meet the growing demands of veterans in the Rapid City area. A larger facility was opened near private community-based medical facilities. As Peter's career comes to a close, he continues to work to improve the Rapid City CBOC.

Like many agencies, the VA has been asked to do more with less over the years. The Black Hills VA continues to face challenges as it works to meet the complex needs of our ever growing veterans population, including women veterans, younger veterans, veterans with traumatic brain injuries, post traumatic stress disorder and other illnesses. I commend Peter's ability to address these challenges and ensure that South Dakota's veterans are provided the quality care they deserve.

I have always appreciated Peter's insight and input on issues impacting the VA Health Care System, the Black Hills VA, and veterans in general. I congratulate Peter on his many years of federal service and applaud him for his passionate work on behalf of veterans and their families. I wish Peter and his wife Sharon all the best in his retirement.●

WATERTOWN BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD MONASTERY

● MR. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, with great honor, today I congratulate the Watertown Benedictine Sisters of the Mother of God Monastery in their celebration of providing 50 years of faith-based service.

Founded in 1961, the Watertown Benedictine Sisters have served in hospitals, schools, prisons, parishes, reservations, and nursing homes in communities throughout South Dakota.

Originally the Watertown Benedictine Sisters focused on serving in elementary and secondary Catholic schools in North Dakota and South Dakota. Many of the children that the sisters have helped can still recount their fond memories of the important and caring deeds that the Sisters preformed.

Today the Sisters work for parish ministries, schools, pastoral care, hospitals, and care facilities. The Sisters, through their 50 years of service, have developed strong ties with the Watertown community and have always offered a hand to those in need.

In honor of this momentous occasion the Sisters plan to host an interfaith discussion of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and to create a book detailing the rich history of the Watertown Benedictine Sisters of the Mother of God Monastery.

I am proud to have this opportunity to honor the Watertown Benedictine Sisters of the Mother of God Monastery for their outstanding service. It is an honor for me to share with my colleagues the strong commitment the Sisters have for relentlessly caring for those in need. I strongly commend their years of hard work and dedication, and I am very pleased that their substantial efforts are being publicly honored and celebrated.●

YANKTON, SOUTH DAKOTA

● Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I recognize the 150th anniversary of the founding of one of South Dakota's great cities, Yankton. Located along the Missouri River, Yankton serves as the county seat of Yankton County and is a source of great history.

Yankton, founded in 1861 and incorporated on May 8, 1862, was the original capital of Dakota Territory. The founders of Yankton derived the city's name from the Sioux expression E-hank-ton-wan, which means "people of the end village." Yankton College, founded in 1881, was the first liberal arts college in Dakota Territory, providing the community with rich opportunities through higher education, continued today through Mount Marty College.

Riverboat Days and the Summer Arts Festival are held every August in Yankton and bring visitors from all over the state to enjoy the scenic beauty and relaxing atmosphere the city has to offer. Yankton is an outdoor enthusiast's dream, offering access to hunting, fishing, golfing, parks, hiking trails, kayaking and canoeing, and other water recreation sports. The Gavins Point Dam makes the city's water recreation possible along with providing hydroelectric power. Yankton is home to the Dakota Territorial museum, which provides a glimpse of the rich history of the Dakota Territory and the events that shaped the Midwest itself. Yankton is also the hometown of perhaps South Dakota's most famous resident, Tom Brokaw, former anchor of the NBC