

HONORING THE RETURN OF SAM JOHNSON AND THE 45TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION HOMECOMING

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 2018

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the 45th anniversary of my friend and hero, Congressman SAM JOHNSON, returning home from his imprisonment in a North Vietnamese prison camp during the Vietnam War. Operation Homecoming, which occurred from February through April in 1973, returned 591 American prisoners of war held during the Vietnam War.

During SAM's tenure of nearly three decades in the United States Air Force, he unfortunately spent nearly seven years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. During his time in captivity, SAM endured various forms of torture, designed to break his will. His continuous defiance caused his Vietnamese captors to place Congressman JOHNSON in a notoriously cruel prisoner of war camp, nicknamed the "Hanoi Hilton." Even after being subjected to 42 months of solitary confinement and repeatedly tortured, SAM never let his captors defeat his resistant spirit and will. On February 17, 1973, SAM was able to return home to Texas, where he was greeted by his family.

Colonel JOHNSON retired after 29-years in the United States Air Force, serving as a director of the Air Force Fighter Weapons School, a commander of the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing at Homestead Air Reserve Base, a commander with an air division out of Holloman Air Force Base, and a pilot in the Air Force Thunderbirds. Flying over 62 combat missions and being a combat veteran of both the Vietnam and Korean Wars, SAM encapsulates patriotism and dedication to his country. For his service, SAM was awarded two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and a Bronze Star, among other well-earned awards.

It is a privilege and an honor to serve alongside one of my personal heroes and true friends. We first served together in the Texas State Legislature from 1987 until 1991, when Congressman JOHNSON was elected to represent Texas' 3rd Congressional District. Since being elected in 2005 for the 24th District of Texas, I have been fortunate to continue to serve alongside SAM not only in the House of Representatives, but on the Ways and Means Committee as well. My esteemed colleague epitomizes service and dedication to our country, with a full and accomplished career of public service after serving valiantly in our military.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to recognize the 45th anniversary of Congressman SAM JOHNSON's release, and congratulate him on his lifetime of service. I ask all of my colleagues to join me in recognizing the anniversary of SAM's return to the United States; and in remembering this anniversary, we also remember all of those captured and imprisoned defending our liberty and freedom.

HONORING WENDY PIASECKI AS EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 2018

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor Mrs. Wendy Piasecki as she is presented with the 2018 Educator of the Year award by the West Seneca Chamber of Commerce at Kloc's Grove. Mrs. Piasecki exemplifies dedication as an educator, and West Seneca is fortunate to benefit from her talents.

Forty years ago, Mrs. Piasecki began her career by earning her Master of Music degree in composition theory. At age 40, Mrs. Piasecki boldly decided to go back to school and attain a teaching certificate.

Mrs. Piasecki devoted her career to music education in and outside of schools. In her two decades plus in the West Seneca Central School District, Mrs. Piasecki has taught music education and theater at nearly every grade level and at every school. She has tutored students outside of school in music theory and piano. Outside of the classroom, Mrs. Piasecki has helped students in extracurricular activities, such as preparing for the Erie County Music Educators Association Music Festival, chaperoning students' trips to the Young People's concert at Fantasy Island, directing musicals, and even presenting student performers at the Junior Musical Theater Celebration at Shea's Theater, one of Buffalo's finest performance venues.

Educators like Mrs. Piasecki, who invest themselves in the children and our community, are part of what makes Western New York such a special place. Because of her dedication, parents can rest assured that their kids will be attending school in a supportive environment that allows them to explore their creative sides while receiving a first-rate education.

Mr. Speaker, once again I want to honor Mrs. Wendy Piasecki as she receives the West Seneca Chamber of Commerce's 2018 Educator of the Year award. Her personal devotion to teaching serves as a model for future educators and an inspiration to all of us who believe in public service.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MRS. LOVEY ANNA LEAVELL

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 2018

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the generous, path-breaking life of Mrs. Lovey Anna Leavell of Sandusky, Ohio. Lovey passed from this life on Saturday, January 22, 2018 after a short illness. She will be truly missed by her family and friends. Lovey was indefatigable.

Lovey's involvement and commitment to her hometown of Sandusky was known by everyone in the area. Her life of service to her community started at the historic Second Baptist Church where she served as Church Secretary, Choir Director, teacher, and Sunday school superintendent. It is also here where

she would meet her husband of 60 plus years, Daniel Leavell.

Once her children became school age and began to attend Sandusky City Schools she became active in the school system as well. When her children were young she worked for the school district as a teacher's aide, bus driver, and served as the Treasurer for the Sandusky Band Parents Association. Her dedication to the Sandusky City schools continued always. Even after her children graduated, she continued her connection to the school by working as a substitute teacher.

Civil rights was a cause that Lovey was committed to as well. As a lifetime member of the Sandusky NAACP, she worked on a number of committees for her local branch. She would help set up meetings at which local politicians would be able to talk about issues dealing not only with civil rights, but also other important issues that impacted the community. Her commitment to civil rights was one of the main reasons she decided to become a realtor. Throughout her life she saw the damage that was being done to minorities due to the effects of redlining. It was her commitment to civil rights that made her want to become a realtor in order to help people obtain the American dream of home ownership.

Lovey Leavell was on a first name basis with every elected official that represented the city of Sandusky, from local up through the federal level. It was not uncommon for politicians and candidates to call her and her husband Dan for advice. She was a lifelong Democrat, her views on politics were perhaps best described by Sandusky Mayor Dennis Murray when he said this about Lovey, "She was never about the games of partisanship. She believed totally in people and in the core things that Democrats stand for—equality, opportunity and good government."

Later in life when most people would decide to relax and enjoy their retirement years, Lovey decided it was time for her to get a college degree. She received two degrees, associates and then bachelors, both from BGSU Firelands. Her time at Firelands was filled not only with classwork but also with trips to the United Nations in New York, involvement with student government, and several other groups. The students there would come to know her as "Grandma Lovey". During her time there she made such an impression on the students, staff, and faculty she was awarded the Links to Progress Award, the highest honor any person can receive from BGSU Firelands.

During Lovey's final years she served on the Ohio 9th congressional military academy nomination committee in 2015 and 2016. She continued her service on the James McBride Arboretum at BGSU Firelands. She never stopped being a realtor or working for civil rights with the NAACP. Even with her impressive life accomplishments, there was one thing Lovey felt she was missing: a Sandusky High School diploma. It was something she had wanted for more than half a century. In September of 2017 the Sandusky School Board presented her with an honorary high school diploma for her life time commitment to education and her involvement in the community.

Lovey is survived by her husband Dan, children Dan Jr., Doug and Deanna, a number of grandchildren, family, and friends. We offer them our prayers and hope that they comfort in the wonderful memories of this extraordinary woman, our dear friend Lovey. She will