

and dozens of other species—began to slowly recover in some areas. Scientists estimate that the act has directly prevented the extinction of more than 200 species.

The act has long been a point of contention between industry and conservationists, and has come under criticism from previous administrations. But under the Trump administration, at least 63 separate legislative efforts to weaken the act have been undertaken since January 2017, according to the Centre for Biological Diversity.

Among them were the delisting of various species that conservationists argue are not fully recovered, like grizzly bears in Yellowstone National Park. The attempts to water down the act are “among the worst” by any administration, said Bruce Stein, the chief scientist of the National Wildlife Federation.

TRIBUTE TO DWAIN “DOC” PRESTON

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in honor of April being National Poetry Month, I want to take a few moments to recognize an extraordinary teacher, poet, and Quincy, IL, legend, Dwain “Doc” Preston.

In the winter of 1936, Doc was born on a farm near Barry, IL. The son of a World War II tank crewman and a tough as nails mother who grew up in Oklahoma surviving the Dust Bowl, Doc attended four different one-room schoolhouses, including Berrian Elementary School in Quincy. After graduating from Liberty High School, he enrolled at Western Illinois University. That was the decision that he said “took me out of the cornfield.”

Doc joined the Air Force, attending Chinese language school, spending 6 hours a day for 8 months, studying at Yale University. To this day, much of his work in the Air Force remains classified. After his service, Doc returned to Quincy and was introduced to Regina Higgins by a friend Jay Lenne at Park Bowl, a bowling alley at the corner of 12th and Harrison. They fell in love, got married, and started their family. They had the first of four daughters in 1963, the second in 1964, the third in 1965, and lastly, the fourth, in—you guessed it—1966.

Doc followed in his uncle’s footsteps—a teacher of 55 years—and accepted a position at Quincy Junior High School after two of his former teachers vouched for him. Six years later, Doc used his G.I. bill to work toward his doctorate at the University of Illinois in Champaign. While working on his dissertation, he taught at Western Illinois University and officially became “Doc” Preston. He then did the unexpected and tried his hand at selling insurance, but Doc had teaching in his blood and returned to the classroom after just 1 year. For the next 26 years, Doc Preston could be found in the classroom, teaching writing, speech, and English at Quincy Notre Dame, where each of his daughters would attend high school. He also supervised the QND student council, teaching leadership skills and important life lessons that aren’t normally found in high school textbooks. Even

after his official retirement, Doc continued teaching creative writing to seniors and others.

Throughout the years, Doc has stayed in touch with many of his students. They will send him notes using words like icon, terrific, great, awesome, amazing, special—to describe him as a teacher or writer, but mostly as a man. When hearing these compliments, he responds in his humble simple way: “That’s always fun.” They just don’t make them like Doc Preston anymore.

Doc and his wife, Regina, spent 44 years, or as Doc put it, “over 16,000 days” together before Regina passed away in 2006, just 4 weeks following Doc’s retirement. In his beautiful poem titled, To Regina, he writes:

For over 16,000 days
You were part of me.
Now only memories are left
Of days that used to be.
But Ah! What memories they are!
The Buoy of my very life,
Which would have been of little worth
Had you not been my wife.

His words are haunting as he takes us on an emotional ride that both breaks the heart and allows us to celebrate the blessings that are memories.

Doc Preston didn’t write to publish or make money. He wrote because he loved it and his audience, consisting largely of his family, loved it. When each of his four daughters were married, Doc wrote them a sonnet. When each of his 11 grandchildren turned 13, he wrote what could be called a “good-bye to their youth” poem. When they were younger, Doc wrote each of them a book. All told, Doc estimates he has written about 150 books. On his 80th birthday, Doc’s children compiled and presented him with a book of his poem’s that he dedicated to Regina.

Despite being a brilliant writer and teacher, Doc’s proudest accomplishment is his family. In an interview last year, he said, “One of the things that is joyful about being a parent is watching them grow up and succeed.” His children certainly did. Two even went into the family business and became teachers. Doc loved parenting, but he once said, “Grandparenting is better.” I couldn’t agree more.

When looking for heaven, many look toward the sky—not Doc Preston. Doc and Regina, looked along the river bluffs of the Mississippi River and built heaven in Quincy, IL. Whether it was with Doc’s wife, Regina, four daughters—Carolyn, Cheri, Debbie, Teresa—11 grandchildren, or countless student, his life, love, and poetry have touched so many lives, including my own.

I want to thank Doc Preston for his dedication to teaching and his generosity to the wonderful people of Quincy. They call Quincy “Gem City.” Well, there is no gem shining brighter than Dwain “Doc” Preston.

Thank you, Doc, for sharing your gift with us all.

I would like to share the final lines of Doc’s poem, Southern Memories.

Oh, yes, I’ll savor snapshots,
To be sure,
But what I’ll treasure most
Are all the memories I made with you.

Doc’s right. I would like to tell him that what will be treasured most by those who know Doc, “Are all the memories [we] made with you.”

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I wish to call attention to what has been called the world’s most neglected humanitarian crisis and call upon the administration to play an active leadership role in helping bring a sustainable peace to the Central African Republic, CAR. Diplomatic attention, especially from the United States, has waned over the past 2 years. If we fail to commit diplomatic attention to CAR, we risk increasing threats to regional stability, U.S. investments, and, most tragically, the lives and livelihoods of millions of Central Africans.

CAR has long been beset by political and social upheaval. Since independence in 1960, the country has endured coups, military mutinies, rebellions, and incursions by the infamous Lord’s Resistance Army. The most recent civil war accelerated in 2013 after rebels opposed to the government of Francois Bozize took over the capitol. Their campaign to seize the capitol and the response by resulting self-defense militias were characterized by widespread violence against civilians. France, the European Union, and the African Union all deployed troops to prevent further bloodshed, and in 2014, the U.N. deployed a peacekeeping mission mandated to protect civilians and prevent further intercommunal fighting. The State Department’s Atrocities Prevention Board identified CAR as a country at risk, and the United States took action accordingly, working on the ground to support interventions to prevent mass atrocities.

These vigorous diplomatic actions ushered in a period of relative calm. In the wake of Pope Benedict’s visit in 2015 and peaceful elections in 2015–2016, the situation on the ground appeared to stabilize. President Faustin-Archange Touadera was elected in what was arguably the most competitive contest of any leader in the central Africa region. Donors pledged \$2.2 billion to support stabilization and postconflict reconstruction in late 2016.

However, in 2017, security in the country began to precipitously decline. Militia and criminal gangs in the north and eastern parts of the country began fighting each other in a quest for control over territory and resources, threatening the fragile peace. Entire villages have been destroyed, civilians targeted and killed. While the government and 13 armed groups signed a notional peace deal in June 2017—the fifth disarmament agreement signed by armed groups in 4 years—renewed fighting quickly followed.