

D-Day operations at Tarawa Atoll in the Pacific. On November 22, 1943, Whitaker was killed in action during the effort to secure Betio Island in the Tarawa Atoll. He was 18 years old. During this battle, over 3,000 U.S. marines and sailors were killed or wounded. After the war was over, there were efforts to repatriate all of the fallen; however, almost half of the known casualties were not recovered.

In March of this year, thanks to the efforts of History Flight, Inc., the Republic of Kiribati, and the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Whitaker's remains were identified. On November 22, 2019, 76 years after he gave the last full measure of devotion in service to his country, Channing Whitaker will be buried with full military honors in Des Moines, IA.

Our country owes a debt of gratitude to all who have served in defense of our country and especially to those who killed in action. I am grateful that this Iowan is finally coming home and that his service and sacrifice will always be remembered.

REMEMBERING MISTER FRED ROGERS

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President I rise today to pay tribute to the legacy of one of our Nation's most treasured educators and performers and a native Pennsylvanian, Mister Fred Rogers. Many are recognizing today as World Kindness Day and are performing acts of kindness toward their loved ones, neighbors, and even strangers. Perhaps no American embodies the spirit of kindness more than Fred Rogers.

Affectionately known by children and adults alike as "Mister Rogers," Fred McFeely Rogers was born in Latrobe, PA on March 20, 1928. From an early age, Fred Rogers demonstrated an interest in learning, making art through creative expression, and serving other. He graduated with a degree in music composition from Rollins College in Winter Park FL., in 1951 and earned a degree in divinity from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in 1962. A year later, he became an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church.

Mister Rogers began his television career shortly after college, working on the sets of NBC in New York City. He then moved back to Southwestern Pennsylvania to work for the first community-owned, public television station in the country, Pittsburgh's WQED. He gained a firsthand view of the transformative power of television and the impact that educational programs could have on adults and children. At WQED, Mister Rogers worked with Josie Carey on a program called "The Children's Corner", where many of his now-familiar characters were first given life. Additionally, he sought the expertise of Dr. Margaret McFarland, the director of the Arsenal Family and Children's Center in Pittsburgh, to integrate best teaching practices into his work.

In 1963, Rogers appeared on camera for the first time to host a children's program called "Misterogers". The program was filmed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Toronto and aired until 1967. Rogers returned to Pittsburgh and WQED, where he created and filmed "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood". By 1968, the Public Broadcasting Service was broadcasting Mister Rogers to thousands of households throughout the country.

For three decades, Mister Rogers brought love, kindness, generosity, grace, laughter, and cheer into the lives of countless children and their families. His lessons and performances on "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" taught children about respect, safety, perseverance, civility, and caring for others. He did not shy away from issues that face almost every child, including intolerance, disagreement, and bullying. Because he could connect with children in a way few adults could, Mister Rogers helped children to cope and understand difficult emotional issues like anger, death, and divorce. Mister Rogers was a friend to all children and played an important role in the lives of many by reminding them of their self-worth.

Mister Rogers was bestowed with numerous accolades, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which was awarded by President George W. Bush in 2002. Since his death on February 27, 2003, scores of people have paid tribute to Mister Rogers' life and legacy. This year, Pennsylvania celebrated the first 1-4-3 Day—the number of letters in the word "I love you", as Mister Rogers would note—in Rogers' honor. Last month, the city of Nashville, TN, proclaimed November as Thank You, Mister Rogers Month. The arts industry has paid tribute to Rogers' body of work through collaborative music projects, biographies, and feature films. The outpouring of support is a testament to Rogers' impact on the Nation. Even today, millions of children continue to benefit from Mister Rogers' work through programs like the cartoon "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," which is made and distributed by Fred Rogers Productions.

Fred Rogers will be remembered as a trailblazer in television, master educator, model citizen, and most notably, an inspiration to children and communities across the Nation. His legacy lives on through his art and can be found in acts of kindness being done in every neighborhood across the country.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to join me in celebrating the life of Fred Rogers, a friendly neighbor and model citizen for whom every day was beautiful.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LEE GIBSON

● Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I come forward today to recognize the

executive director of the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County, Lee Gibson, who after over 10 years of dedicated service, announced his retirement this year.

Since his appointment to chief director of the RTC in 2009, Mr. Gibson has worked tirelessly to improve customer service and promote collaboration with the local community. During his tenure at the RTC, he has reduced agency operating costs by over 30 percent while delivering the largest multimodal construction program in the agency's history. His dedication and pragmatism has helped guide the RTC of Washoe County through tumultuous economic times as well as the exponential growth of the Reno-Sparks area.

The RTC, under the management of Mr. Gibson, adopted a sustainability policy that has led to a multitude of successful projects, including earning national recognition for the SouthEast Connector. The RTC has also been recognized for achieving LEED certification for two recently opened transit centers and obtained recognition for the development of Complete Streets and sustainable highway design throughout the Truckee Meadows. The region was even designated as a bicycle-friendly community by the American League of Bicyclists.

Mr. Gibson did not just focus on restructuring the transit system during his time as the Director of the RTC; his emphasis on customer service and time performance led to improved customer satisfaction with the transportation services. This is due to the RTC's implementation of innovative services, such as the RTC RAPID bus rapid transit project. Mr. Gibson also succeeded in delivering a broader community outreach program and successfully collaborated with other agencies to plan and deliver efficient and effective transportation services.

Mr. Gibson made sure to give back to his community beyond his impressive service in the RTC. He is a founding member of Northern Nevada Transportation Collaborative, NNTC, a coalition of business and government leaders, academic researchers, transportation professionals, and citizens committed to promoting transportation as a key tool for economic revitalization, quality of life, and sustainability. In 2012 he became the chairman of the Nevada Executive Committee for Transportation Safety. There, he works with State and local agencies to promote safety policies for all modes of transportation. He is also a member of the TRB Planning Applications Committee and the APTA Planning and Policy Committee.

Today, I celebrate the many contributions of Lee Gibson to the Reno-Sparks metropolitan area and Washoe County as well as to the Northern Nevada community. We owe Mr. Gibson a debt of gratitude for his service and his leadership will be missed.●