

Carmen Ana Fournier Figueroa and Dr. Felix Rafael Vega Sala on their 60th wedding anniversary.

Carmen Ana and Felix Vega met in 1959 when they were 15 and 17 years old. She was born in Bayamón and he was born in Hatillo, Puerto Rico. Within a few years of meeting one another, they married in 1963 and moved to Seville, Spain, where Felix continued his medical education with the help and support of his devoted wife Carmen Ana. After four years in Spain, they returned to Puerto Rico where Felix completed his medical degree and obtained his license as a psychiatrist.

In 1982, the family traveled again to Fort Smith, Arkansas, where Dr. Vega served as a lead psychiatrist for the Cuban refugees who had fled oppression in the Mariel boatlift. In 1984, the family moved back to Puerto Rico, and Dr. Vega continued his long-standing professional career with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in the San Juan Regional Office. After 28 years, Dr. Vega retired as a distinguished medical professional for the VA in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Their devotion and love for one another has been witnessed by many and, has embodied one of the most important vows in marriage; “in sickness and in health.” When Carmen Ana was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010, it was not only her faith, bravery, and courageous attitude that got her through this life-threatening disease, but it was the loving care of her husband, and support of her doctors, friends, and family, that helped her defeat this devastating disease.

Dr. Felix Vega and Carmen Ana have two children, Felix, and Carmen, as well as four young grandchildren, Fabiana, Carlos Enrique, Felix Sebastian and Carmen Sofia. The entire family lives happily in Puerto Rico.

Please join me in giving Carmen Ana and Felix warmhearted congratulations on their 60th wedding anniversary. I commend them and wish them many more happy years together.

CONGRATULATING AUGUSTIN TELLEZ ON RECEIVING SONS OF ITALY FOUNDATION HUMANITARIAN AWARD

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of my friend Augustin ‘Augie’ Tellez, who is this year’s recipient of the Sons of Italy Foundation’s Humanitarian Award. From his leadership in organized labor to his pride in his Italian heritage, Augie truly deserves this honor—as well as the gratitude of many people across Maryland and America.

Serving as the Executive Vice President of the Seafarers International Union (SIU) since 2005, Augie has been an important voice for mariners, boatmen, and fishermen across North America. He has a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities that people face in his industry. Augie’s tenure with SIU began when he graduated from the Paul Hall Center’s Lundeberg School of Seafarership down in Piney Point, Maryland, in 1975. After five years of serving the union in several posts across the country, he rose through the

ranks to become port agent of SIU’s headquarters port and later special assistant to the union’s president. Trusting Augie’s good judgement and inspiring leadership, the SIU executive board appointed him to serve as the union’s vice president of contracts and contracts enforcement in 1991—a position that union membership reelected him to the following year. He served in that role until 2005, overseeing all the union’s collective bargaining efforts. From helping develop the SIU’s training record book to overseeing contract implementation for the union, he has made invaluable contributions to the SIU and continues to do so as Executive Vice President. His work isn’t limited to the SIU, however.

Many government and industry leaders have sought out Augie’s expertise and insight. He has served on the U.S. Transportation Command’s Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement Executive Working Group (EWG) for over two decades, fostering closer cooperation between the federal government and his industry to ensure that the U.S. military has access to vital commercial shipping resources in the event of an emergency deployment. Similarly, between 2011 and 2022, Augie served on the U.S. Transportation Department’s Marine Transportation National Advisory Council. As chair of the council’s U.S. Maritime Workforce Working Group Subcommittee, he helped assess how the nation’s mariner workforce could support the American merchant fleet during national emergencies. Indeed, the recent COVID-19 pandemic reminded us of the vital importance of maintaining strong supply chains, and Augie has played an important role in that effort.

I’ve also been grateful for all that Augie has done for our community in Southern Maryland. He has served as a trustee for the Paul Hall Center and as chair of its advisory board for years. He was instrumental in securing key expansions to the school. That includes the Joseph Sacco Fire Fighting and Safety School, which provides maritime firefighting training, and a cutting-edge facility with a variety of simulators that help seafarers develop important shiphandling skills and learn industry procedures. Thanks in part to Augie’s efforts, Paul Hall Center now offers more U.S. Coast Guard-approved training courses than any other school in America, providing a first-rate education to its students and graduating some of the world’s best merchant mariners year after year. We are so lucky to have this esteemed institution in Southern Maryland and to have leaders like Augie who help run it.

It’s been a pleasure to know Augie all these years. From preserving America’s maritime traditions to protecting workers’ rights, he continues to do crucial work on behalf of our state and Nation. I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Augie on this award and in thanking him for all that he has done for our country and its mariners.

RECOGNIZING GENE OVERHOLT’S SERVICE TO THE CITY OF PLYMOUTH AND TO THE NATION

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Gene Overholt, a veteran of the

Second World War and a longtime resident of Plymouth, Michigan, on the occasion of his passing. His service to the nation and dedication to his community over 99 years of life is worthy of commendation.

Gene was born in the small town of Bippus, Indiana in 1924, before moving to Huntington, Indiana. He and his wife, Jane, were childhood sweethearts and began dating at the age of 13. He joined the armed forces as soon as he was of age, where he was trained as a “telephone man”. On the battlefield, Gene served by running communication channels, culminating in his participation in the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944/45.

He came home and began work at Michigan Bell, where he would spend the rest of his career. He and his wife Jane raised their three daughters in Plymouth, Michigan, and though he was done with his military service, his service to his community was just beginning. Gene was one of the founding members of the Kiwanis Club of Colonial Plymouth, and eventually was elected as the President of Kiwanis International in 1988–89. In 1962, Gene assisted in the creation of the Plymouth Salvation Army, where he served on the Board until his passing earlier this year. He also spent a decade on the Plymouth Township Board of Trustees and was eventually inducted into the Plymouth Hall of Fame. In honor of his three daughters, all of whom taught in the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools, Gene founded the Gene and Jane Overholt Educational Scholarship Foundation. This foundation, which gives scholarships to students going into the field of education or other service professions, will carry on Gene’s legacy for decades to come.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in celebrating Gene Overholt’s life of service to our country and to his community. Though he is no longer with us, his legacy of service will live on through his daughters, his foundation, and the indelible impression he has left upon his city. I thank Gene.

CONGRATULATING PRESIDENT-ELECT SANTIAGO PEÑA PALACIOS

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the American people extend congratulations to the Honorable Santiago Peña Palacios on being elected to the Presidency of Paraguay on May 2nd. His success as a former member of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Paraguay and former Minister of Finance of Paraguay demonstrates his ability to be a great leader. I am grateful for his dedicated work on anti-corruption, equal application of law, and advancing security, and economic growth for the benefit of both our countries creating jobs.

The United States established diplomatic relations with Paraguay in 1861, 50 years after Paraguay declared independence from Spain. The longstanding relationship of our nations is characterized by cooperation, shared interests, and a strong bilateral trade relationship. The history of Paraguay as an independent nation has been marked by political upheavals, but in 1989, it underwent a transition to civilian leadership and democratic elections, which the United States supported.