

"Alex has accepted the responsibility of trying to improve the living conditions of the community," U.S. Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery said.

"He's always trying to help someone else . . . He's more concerned helping others than himself," added Noel Evans, executive director of the Choctaw Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America. "Meridian is fortunate to have great community leaders such as Alex; they make Meridian a great place to live."

Today, Weddington will be presented the "Humanitarian of the Year Award" by the Meridian Junior Auxiliary. According to Kay Wedgeworth, chairman, the honoree was reluctant when informed that he'd been selected for the recognition.

" . . . He said, 'I'll make you a deal. Give it to the guy who come in second and I won't say a word,'" said Wedgeworth. The award is presented annually to a person, organization or business in recognition of the time, talent and effort which they have contributed to the betterment of the community, particularly youth.

A native of Meridian, Weddington first became associated with the Masonic home out of curiosity.

"I've always had a curious nature. I'd driven by the home hundreds of times and wondered what was up there. One day in 1981, I stopped by and asked Pete Griffis, who, at the time was grand secretary, what it (the home) was about. When he told me they needed help, I told him he had it."

He started out by taking the kids out on Fridays to the movies, skating, camping or to local events and activities. Over the years, this has extended to also include two vacations each year—an early summer one to various locales and one in late summer at his family's home on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Sometimes, he just invites the kids to his home, rents movies and orders pizza.

"Each one of these children come from unique circumstances. They're wonderful children and given a chance in life, which is what the masonic home does, they will make something of their lives," said Weddington. ". . . God has really blessed me for being able to help out with these children. A lot of people look at it that the children are blessed; I'm the one who is blessed."

He considers his deeds as "what I'm supposed to do. I think it's what God wants me to do," he said.

"Alex is always doing things for other folks and never wants any recognition," said Fred Bean, who currently serves as grand secretary of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi and secretary of the board of managers at the masonic home. "He's taken the kids at the home water rafting, camping, on trips to Disney World, Six Flags, Liberty Land . . . He provides them opportunities they may not have otherwise."

His dedication to the kids is solid. He seldom cancels his Friday nights with them.

In fact, on his first date with his wife, the kids went along.

"I called her up and told her I wanted to know what kind of sport she was. I explained that I took the kids from the home out every Friday night and that our first date was going to be with 23 children. I didn't want to disappoint them. I picked her up with 23 kids, a dog and myself . . . She was a good sport."

Commenting on that first outing, Mrs. Weddington said, "It definitely was different from any other date I'd been on. But I knew then that he was special. Here he was a bachelor who had a lot going for him. And on a Friday night when most bachelors were out on a date, Alex was with all of these kids.

"He's a good role model in a time when strong models are needed. He's a good lis-

tener, intuitive . . . and can read those kids like a book. He tries to encourage them to study and that just because they were born under bad circumstances, it doesn't mean they don't have the power to change the course of their lives."

Scouting is one way Weddington has motivated the youth to taking responsibility for their lives. He especially encourages the boys to aim for the Eagle Scout Award.

"Scouting builds character. For the boys, achieving the Eagle Scout Award is one of the greatest accomplishments. This year, Anthony Watkins and Glen Burge both will receive the award; I'm really proud of them."

Scholastic achievement is another source of inspiration. Each year, Weddington takes the three children with the best grades at the end of the semester on a skiing trip in Colorado.

"I try to make sure they really study hard; I've found this trip to be a great motivating factor. Most of these kids have never been in an airplane; it's really exciting for them," he said. "These kids have gone from making 'Cs' and 'Ds' to 'As' and 'Bs.'"

Other ways he has helped the home is by securing funds "for the little extras." In 1985, he enlisted Montgomery's support in sponsoring a golf tournament. Now in its 11th year, the "Sonny" Montgomery-Masonic Home Benefit Golf Tournament has netted more than \$100,000.

Funds are used for outings, trips and other necessities.

But more than anything, it gives them another opportunity to spend time with one of their favorite people. Without a doubt, the kids love Weddington, but not just because he "takes them places."

"He's a great man," said Joseph Walker, 12. ". . . He's very nice but if you mess up, he'll make sure you don't do it again; and you won't."

Sisters Felicia Kern, 12, and Christine, 13, enjoy being around Weddington because "he's fun and has a nice personality."

Glen Burge, 17, describes Weddington as a great person with a big heart.

"He puts in a lot of time with us and cares about us a lot. I really appreciate all that he has done for us and the only way I can pay him back is to say, 'Thank-you.' He's truly a blessing to my heart."

As the Meridian Junior Auxiliary's Humanitarian of the Year, Weddington will receive a plaque and \$500 will be donated in his name to the charity of his choice.

TRIBUTE TO FOOD-PATCH

HON. SUE W. KELLY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to acknowledge the extraordinary work being done by Food-PATCH, an organization in my congressional district.

Food-PATCH, which stands for People Allied to Combat Hunger, is dedicated to alleviating hunger while minimizing food waste in Westchester County, NY.

This 7-year-old organization was formed as a nonprofit emergency food distribution center. With financial support of Kraft Foods and Diversified Investment Advisors, Food-PATCH began its work in a 13,000-square-foot warehouse in Millwood, NY. With the help of 10 full-time, 6 part-time employees, and more than 8,000 volunteer hours, Food-PATCH distributed more than 3 million pounds of food to

more than 140 emergency food providers last year. This translates to more than 8 tons of food a day to soup kitchens, food pantries, Head Start programs, shelters, senior programs, AIDS programs, and many others that provide meals for 220,000 individuals.

In short, Food-PATCH has been dedicated to ensuring that no one in Westchester County goes to bed hungry. Food-PATCH's T-shirts bear this motto and I and hundreds of others from Westchester County proudly wear ours in tribute to this wonderful organization.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when we must be especially mindful of the needs of others, I ask you to join with me in honoring the men and women at Food-PATCH who keep the true spirit of this season all year long.

TRIBUTE TO MANUEL MIJARES

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend and pay tribute to Mr. Manuel Mijares, the newly selected Mr. Amigo.

Every year members of the Mr. Amigo Association, who represent the city of Brownsville TX, travel to Mexico City to select a new Mr. Amigo to serve as the honored guest of the Mr. Amigo festivities in Brownsville. The Mr. Amigo festivity is a 4-day international event which invites the United States and Mexico to join together in celebration of the distinct cultures of these neighboring countries. During the Mr. Amigo celebration, which originated as a pre-Lenten festival, Brownsville citizens participate in a series of parades, dances, and parties to demonstrate the goodwill of both countries. It is a major function which is eagerly anticipated by many South Texans as well as our winter visitors.

We are honored to recognize Mr. Manuel Mijares as the 32d Mexican citizen chosen by the Mr. Amigo Association. He began his career as a backup singer for the well-known Mexican pop star Emanuel. But this was just the beginning. In 1986 he released his first album entitled "Mijares" which quickly earned silver and gold status. His international acclaim is evident in the many awards he has received throughout Latin America, the United States, and Japan. Some of his awards include: the Golden Award Medallion in Japan, the Latin Music Award in the Dominican Republic; Revelation in Mexico; Ovacion for outstanding artist in Chicago; Antorcha de Plata award from Chile; Premio AC; History of Spectacles in New York; Aplauso 92 in Miami, and Galardon a los Grandes in Mexico.

In addition to his musical talent, Mijares has also been praised internationally for his presence in the theater. He is a regular guest on "Siempre en Domingo," "En Vivo," and "Eco"; popular international television shows. Disney has also recognized and selected this talented and versatile artist to sing the Spanish themes for "Oliver and Company" and "Beauty and the Beast." It is not only this type of talent which transcends cultural lines that we recognize today, but it is also his compassion for the well-being of his audience. Despite the numerous awards for his artistic talents, Mijares has also demonstrated a concern for development of teens in the United States. One example of his community involvement is his participation in a fundraiser the Los Angeles Police

Department held to raise money for a project to aid youth, which works to improve the attitudes and behaviors of preteens in Los Angeles, CA. The event was attended by 40,000 people.

Mr. Manuel Mijares is a perfect recipient of the Mr. Amigo award. For he has, over the long period of his career, taken his unique song, screen, and stage performances to numerous countries, including sold-out performances in the United States. A true ambassador of his country and of his culture, he has been praised by numerous organizations for his unconditional commitment to improve mutual understanding and cooperation between Mexico and the United States. Mr. Manuel Mijares should be recognized for both his artistic ability and his contribution to the commitment to bicultural relations between nations.

Mr. Amigo, Mr. Manuel Mijares, will receive the red-carpet treatment when he visits Brownsville as the city's honored guest during the upcoming Mr. Amigo celebration. During his stay on the border, he will make personal appearances in the parades and at other festival events. Official welcome receptions will be staged by organizations in Cameron County, TX, and the cities of Brownsville, TX, and Matamoros, Tamaulipas Mexico.

I ask my colleagues to join me in extending congratulations to Mr. Manuel Mijares for being honored with this special award.

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLYMAN BYRON SHER

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the distinguished assemblyman of the 21st assembly district of California, Mr. Byron Sher. He represents a number of communities in San Mateo County and my Congressional District does overlap some of the areas in his State assembly district. We have worked together on many issues for the people of San Mateo County.

This coming weekend, the San Mateo County Democratic Party will salute Byron Sher at a special appreciation dinner held to recognize the service he has rendered to the people of California. After a successful career in the California Assembly, Byron Sher will retire at the end of this legislative session. He will have completed his eighth term in the assembly and is not permitted to run again because of term limitations.

Byron has based his long and productive political career upon the strong foundations of a distinguished academic career. After an ambitious undergraduate career, he earned his Juris Doctor degree from Harvard Law School in 1952. Byron went on to teaching positions at some of the leading law schools around the country, including Southern Methodist, University of Southern California and Harvard Law School. Currently, he is an emeritus professor of law at Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA.

Byron has been active in local and regional government since he came to Palo Alto in 1957. In this time, he has repeatedly shown his commitment to the community. He was a member of the Palo Alto City Council for 9 years and served two terms as mayor. For

many years, Byron has given time to local, State, and national environmental boards.

As a member of the California State Legislature, Byron has many notable achievements. He is the author of landmark laws to protect California's environment, including the California Clean Air Act, the Integrated Waste Management Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act and the nation's first law to prevent toxic contamination from leaking underground storage tanks. He is consistently rated among the top legislators by the most respected environmental, consumer, law enforcement, education and housing groups. I applaud his conscientious hard work on the part of our community and California.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Byron Sher as he completes a record of distinguished service in the California State Assembly. The people of San Mateo County and the people of California have been well served by his leadership and advocacy in the State assembly.

TRIBUTE TO OUR LADY OF THE RIDGE'S FIFTH GRADE GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding group of young ladies from my district, the fifth grade girls' basketball team of Our Lady of the Ridge School.

This squad of eight determined players won the South Suburban Catholic Basketball League title this season, the school's first-ever championship. The girls combined strong rebounding, spirited defense, and relentless hustle into a 14-win season.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate coaches Mike Grove and Brad Liston, as well as their players: Katie Pratl; Megan Liston; Kellie Pratl; Katie Roe; Jackie Grove; Kelly Liston; Colleen Madej; and Laura Dirschl. I wish them continued success on and off the court.

TRIBUTE TO ASSEMBLYMAN BYRON D. SHER

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Byron D. Sher, assemblyman of the 21st District of California, a scholar, a dedicated public servant, and an ardent protector of the environment.

After receiving his juris doctor degree from Harvard Law School in 1952, Byron Sher has held various academic teaching positions in law at Southern Methodist University, the University of Southern California, and Harvard Law School. He became a Stanford University professor of law specializing in consumer credit, consumer protection, contract and commercial law. Colleagues and students have held Byron Sher in their highest regard for his intellect compassion, and dedication to education.

A resident of Palo Alto since 1957, Byron Sher felt a call to public service and has been an active participant in local and regional government. He served on the Palo Alto City Council for 9 years, two terms as mayor. He was also a commissioner of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, a member of the Committee on Environmental Quality for the National League of Cities and the League of California Cities, and a member of the policy advisory board of the League of California Cities' Solar Energy Program.

In November 1980, Byron Sher was elected to the California State Assembly and has served eight terms. His outstanding leadership has been greatly valued in the State legislature where he has served as chairman of the assembly natural resources committee of 10 years. He currently serves on the committees of budget, natural resources, and public safety. He is also a member of the energy committee of the National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], and serves on the California Commission on Uniform State Laws. Colleagues from both sides of the aisle applaud his effective and compassionate service to the people of California.

Dearest to his interests has been the environment, which he has continuously protected as a legislator. Byron Sher has authored landmark legislation, including the California Clean Air Act, the Integrated Waste Management Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Nation's first law to prevent toxic contamination from leaking underground storage tanks. He has authored laws to strengthen the State's timber regulations and the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act, and has added new rivers to California's Wild and Scenic River System. He is consistently rated among the top legislators in Sacramento by environmental groups.

Mr. Speaker, Byron Sher is a most distinguished individual and one of the most respected elected officials in the State of California. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring him.

HMONG REFUGEES IN THAILAND

HON. JACK REED

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 27, 1996

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to submit for the RECORD a letter from Wendy Sherman, Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs at the State Department, in response to my concerns regarding Hmong refugees in Thailand. I am pleased that the State Department has made progress with the Royal Thai Government in gaining access to Hmong refugees. On behalf of the Hmong community in Rhode Island, I will continue to monitor this important issue.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION,

Washington, DC, January 22, 1996.

Hon. JACK REED,

House of Representatives

DEAR MR. REED: Thank you for your letter of November 28, 1995 regarding your concerns for Hmong refugees in Thailand.

First, let me assure you that we share your concern for this special population. Since