

The explosion incinerated ships and businesses. The ship's cargo and dock equipment became missiles and were hurled into businesses, houses, and public buildings.

The explosion was so powerful that it registered on a seismograph as far away as Denver. One thousand homes and buildings throughout the city endured partial or total destruction. An eyewitness described the scene as follows: "For 1,200 feet around the location of the ship, metal shards weighing from one pound to five tons crashed down, creating geysers of water in the ship channel and landing on nearby buildings, killing or injuring the employees inside. Nearly all of the people who were on the wharf, including port officials, volunteer firefighters, and many ship's crew, disappeared, many never to be found."

It was not over yet. The S.S. *High Flyer* was in dock for repairs and carried the volatile ammonium nitrate. The first explosion ignited the chemicals on the *High Flyer* and although emergency workers could move the ship away from the docks, it exploded just hours later. This explosion took the lives of many rescue workers who were pulling bodies from the wreckage.

In all, nearly 600 people were lost. We will never know who many of these individuals were, and thousands more were injured, many severely. There were many heroes there as well. Many of them. These were the 4,000 individuals including those from the Red Cross, other volunteer organizations, and citizens who put out the fires, comforted the casualties while operating temporary hospitals, morgues, and shelters. Help came in from all over Texas and from many areas throughout the country.

I was almost 4 years old, riding my tricycle down Larcum Lane in La Marque when the S.S. *Grandcamp* blew in Texas City, just a couple of miles from my home. I still remember my fear as if it happened yesterday.

Little did I know then that one of the most horrific tragedies in American peacetime history had just occurred; all I knew was that the ground shook, my heart beat double-time, and I had to get home.

Approaching my front yard, I found my mom outside screaming my name. She was terrified upon hearing the explosion, feeling the house shake and the windows rattle, and not knowing where I was.

The happy ending is that we found each other. No one in the Bailey family of La Marque, TX, was injured in the blast. Such was not so for many others, however. Many of my friends grew up without fathers, fathers who had been victims of that blast.

A newspaper headline published 1 year after the tragic explosions announced that "Texas City * * * Rises Phoenix-like From the Abyss of Disaster." The mass tragedy that killed one in 50 citizens and injured 1 in 8, tested the unconquerable spirit of the surviv-

ing citizens. Remember the legend of the Phoenix, which consumed with its own fire, raised itself from the ashes after 500 years.

These resilient people of Texas City would not wait to rise from the ashes that surrounded them. Through the anguish and heartbreak of such loss, they struggled and shared each others sorrow, refusing to let the dreams die. Immediately city leaders tried to restore life to normal—following the disaster, Sunday church services continued uninterrupted and within the following week the civic clubs met as usual.

As I look at this great city 50 years later, I see the qualities that have earned it honors as an all American city. The survivors and their children possess the spirit that has rebuilt one of our Nation's great industrial complexes. The rich history of Texas City includes being a home to the Indians, a prolific 20th century oil boom, and the first aerial squadron of the United States. I say to my good friend here, Mayor Frank Doyle, I was so proud to see that Readers Digest just included you in their list of 1997's top 50 places in America to raise a family. Keep up the great work.

Truly that perfect spring day that became so dark, brought us together as never before. The beauty and strength of the human spirit endured here and I can feel is just as evident today. That spiritual strength in retrospect has changed us all for the better.

As that new sculpture of the Phoenix is slowly unveiled today in the warm Texas sun, the spirit of those heroes will again be felt and remembered by all of us. Only now, this wonderful symbol will help us express it more eloquently.

I ask that my colleagues help me in remembering this disaster and praying that the victims' families, and those who survived the blast, have found peace in the years since.●

YANTIC FIRE ENGINE COMPANY CELEBRATION

● Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the Yantic Fire Engine Company, located in my home State of Connecticut. It serves the largest territorial district in Norwich. This year, the Yantic Fire Engine Company celebrates its 150th anniversary. Perhaps the oldest volunteer fire company in Connecticut, and possibly the United States, this company has been providing an invaluable service to Yantic and the city of Norwich for 150 years.

The Yantic Fire Company was created on June 17, 1847, when the Connecticut General Assembly approved its application for charter. The official name of the fire company was Yantic Fire Company No. 1. Rich in tradition and history, this company is unique for many reasons. It still houses some of its original equipment, including an 1847 Waterman hand tub, an 1891 Silsby steamer, and a Silsby hose carriage.

These pieces, well maintained and restored, are national treasures.

In July, the Village of Yantic will host a parade in honor of the Yantic Fire Engine Company's 150 years of service. This sure-to-be impressive celebration will include over 100 fire companies and numerous marching groups.

I applaud the efforts of the Yantic Fire Engine Company to commemorate their distinguished history. This fire company has worked hard, with pride and distinction to ensure the health and safety of the members of its community. I join with them in paying tribute to those who have given their lives to protecting others, while serving the Yantic Fire Engine Company.●

TRIBUTE TO THE RECIPIENTS OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE AWARD

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, the Police Athletic League of Philadelphia (PAL) is celebrating fifty years of serving the youth of Philadelphia. I rise today to congratulate the dedicated men and women who have made this great success possible.

For five decades, PAL has offered an attractive alternative to street life by cultivating friendships between police officers and children. PAL currently sponsors constructive activities such as sports, substance abuse education, and tutoring programs for more than 24,000 boys and girls of Philadelphia. By providing friends, mentors, and role models for these young people, PAL has helped improve the quality of life for countless children. PAL teaches children to learn, to aspire, and to achieve. The positive impact of this program extends beyond those who are directly involved; this program benefits the entire Philadelphia community.

As we salute this program, we must also celebrate the dedication of those who have worked tirelessly to make it effective. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the seven outstanding recipients of the 50th Anniversary PAL Award. Congratulations to Sally Berlin, John K. Binswanger, Steven Head, Lewis Klein, Ronald A. Krancer, James F. McCabe, and James E. Schleif. The efforts of these individuals to promote the safety of our children deserve the highest honor. Their service to those in need is truly inspirational.

Mr. President, I congratulate these men and women who have worked to make a difference in the lives of so many children, and I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing them. On behalf of the Senate, I offer the recipients of the 50th Anniversary PAL Award best wishes for continued success.●

Thank you, Mr. President.