

TRIBUTE TO JOHN E. "JIMMY"
WILSON; SPIRIT OF AMERICA
AWARD WINNER

HON. TERRY EVERETT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Speaker, I offer tribute today to an outstanding member of the Alabama business community whose labors have distinguished him before a national audience.

I am speaking of Mr. John E. "Jimmy" Wilson of Luverne, AL, who was honored with the Spirit of America Award presented by the National Grocers Association of July 29, 1997.

Mr. Wilson is in good company, joining the likes of President George Bush, Vice President Dan Quayle, and some 350 others who have all received the Spirit of America Award for support of America's independent grocers.

Mr. Wilson has given much to this country. He served honorably in World War II, flying 65 bombing missions in the European theater with the 416 Bombardment Group, 9th Air Force, U.S. Army. His many military honors include the Distinguished Flying Cross for saving a fellow airman's life, the Air Medal with 11 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Presidential Citation for Outstanding Work in Support of Ground Forces.

His war service, combined with strong merchandising skills acquired as a part-time stock boy at T.W. Woolworth's in the early 1930's, served to propel Mr. Wilson toward a lifelong career as a successful businessman.

Beginning in Pensacola and then moving to Montgomery, Mr. Wilson steadily climbed the ladder of the retail grocery business eventually acquiring his own store in Luverne, AL, in 1971. He branched out to include grocery businesses in Greenville in 1977 and in Ozark in 1985.

I not only congratulate Mr. Jimmy Wilson on receiving the Spirit of America Award for 1997, but for inspiring so many by his example as a great American.

HONORING MOTHER TERESA OF
CALCUTTA

HON. JON D. FOX

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 11, 1997

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the closet person to a living saint we may ever know, a woman who transcended religious and political differences wherever her presence was felt. Whether she was opening an AIDS hospice or, as she did in my own district, establishing a homeless shelter, she reached out to all people.

When Mother Teresa died on Friday, the heart of a world already in mourning for Diana, Princess of Wales, broke in grief over the death of this humble Indian woman and for the passing of what many have called a "living saint."

Mr. Speaker, I was personally deeply saddened by the announcement from the Missionaries of Charity that Mother Teresa, the founder of the order, had died. For the past 50 years, Mother Teresa defined compassion as

she devoted her life entirely to poor, the homeless, the disenfranchised, and the sick.

This woman who, during her lifetime, walked with Popes, Presidents, royalty and the most powerful individuals on Earth, clothed in the simple blue and white habit of her order, was happiest when she was attending to the needs of the destitute and ill dying in the gutters of Calcutta, India. She and the sisters of her order literally rescued abandoned children from trash heaps and gave them a lifetime of care and love. She bathed the wounds of lepers and those wracked with AIDS who most would not even touch and she brought peace to those suffering the agony of mental illness. To her, compassion was a vocation—her gift to mankind which she offered as part of her devotion to God.

This tiny, frail woman, whose own body was bent with arthritis and wracked with pain, put her own physical suffering aside as she worked to bring comfort to others. She said "I see God in every human being. When I wash the lepers wounds, I feel I am nursing the Lord himself. Is it not a beautiful experience?" There is much we all could learn from this simple woman of God.

Born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhu on August 27, 1910, in Skopje in what is now Macedonia, she was the youngest of three girls of Albanian parents. In 1928, she became a novitiate in the Loretto Order which runs mission schools in India. She chooses the name Teresa after a French nun, Thésèse Martin who was canonized in 1927.

In 1929, Sister Teresa arrived in Calcutta, India and began to teach at St. Mary's High School. However, teaching was not to be the fulfillment of her life of religious service. In 1946, while riding a train to the mountain town of Darjeeling to recover from suspected tuberculosis, she received a calling from God "to serve Him among the poorest of the poor." In 1947, she was permitted to leave her order and she moves to the slums of Calcutta to establish her first school. In 1949, a former student, Sister Agnes, becomes her first follower and within a year, Sister Teresa has papal approval to form an order called "Missionaries of Charity." It was founded on October 7, the Feast of the Holy Rosary. Mother Teresa chose for her habit a plain, white sari with a blue border and a simple cross pinned to the left shoulder. This same year, she becomes a citizen of India.

In 1952, Mother Teresa received permission from India to use an abandoned Temple to Kali, the Hindu goddess of death and destruction. There she opened the Kalighat Home for the Dying. That same year, she opens Nirmal Hriday ("Pure Heart"), a second home for the dying followed the next year by her first orphanage.

The Indian Government gave Mother Teresa a 34-acre plot of land near the city of Asansol in the mid-1950's. There she opened a leper colony called Shanti Nagar ("Town of Peace").

Mother Teresa won her first prize for her humanitarian work in 1962 when she was given the Padma Shri Award for Distinguished Service. It was at this time that she began her tradition of giving the money from such prizes to the poor.

In 1965, His Holiness, Pope Paul VI places the Missionaries of Charity under direct papal authority and directs Mother Teresa to expand her calling beyond India. In 1971, Pope Paul honored her by awarding Mother Teresa the

first Pope John XXIII Peace Prize. The Government of India honored her in 1972 with the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding.

In 1979, Mother Teresa's tireless efforts on behalf of world peace brought her the Nobel Prize for Peace. Even as the world honored her, the poor were never far from her thoughts saying that such honors were important only if they helped the world's needy. Unlike most Nobel ceremonies, for Mother Teresa there was no lavish banquet and she insisted that the monetary award be given to the poor. When accepting her Nobel Prize she said, "I choose the poverty of our poor people but I am grateful to receive it (the Nobel Prize) in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, of the crippled, of the blind, of the lepers, of all those who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone."

She once said that "The poor give us much more than we give them. They are such strong people, living day-to-day with no food. And they never curse and complain. We don't have to give them pity or sympathy. We have so much to learn from them."

As if to prove her influence on the peace process, in 1982 she persuades Israelis and Palestinians to stop shooting at each other long enough so she and her sisters could rescue 37 mentally-handicapped children from a hospital in besieged Beirut.

What a sight it must have been for the combatants, watching this tiny woman leading a group of children through the rubble of war to safety. The courage it must have taken her and her followers to walk that path, knowing that weapons of all kinds were trained on her and her charges. Yet, it was what God told her to do. She had to save those children and she later said that she knew God would not let her be killed until she saw them to safety.

In 1983, while at the Vatican visiting with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa suffered a heart attack. In 1989, she suffered a second, nearly fatal heart attack and was given a pacemaker—the beginning of a long list of personal illnesses which never slowed her pace.

Mother Teresa traveled to the United States in 1985 where President Ronald Reagan awarded her the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award given by the United States. A frequent visitor to the United States, Mother Teresa returned in November 1996 when this 105th Congress authorized that she be granted honorary American citizenship—a rare honor.

I had the distinct honor of meeting Mother Teresa at that time and it was one of the most memorable moments I have ever experienced. I have never felt such a presence of compassion, faith, and charity in my life. I had previously worked with her followers and saw their good work at a homeless shelter in my district run by members of her order.

The day she visited our Nation's capital and Congress paid tribute to her with honorary citizenship, I will never forget the sight of her. Clad in her simple robe and sandals she stood there among the ornate surroundings of the Capitol Building. This symbol of American freedom and liberty which had seen the like of Jefferson, Lincoln, Kennedy, and Roosevelt had never seen the likes of her. She accepted the honor but took the opportunity to remind