

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

SGT. DONALD WAYNE SLOVER'S
SACRIFICE

HON. LINDA SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 20, 1998

Mrs. LINDA SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, recently, a friend forwarded a copy of this personal letter to us. The thoughts expressed in the letter hit close to home. We hope everyone can take a moment and reflect upon Sgt. Slover's sacrifice.

DEAR AMERICA: I am writing this letter to extend thanks to all the American people who still, despite the recent headlines undermining the ethnics and morality of the military, understand that our jobs and way of life are necessary to preserve the "American" way of life. I once thought that "America" viewed us as most media portrays us; immoral, unethical, and uncivilized. My recent travels led me to conclude that the opposite is true. You, the American people, that honor and respect what we do, deserve a public "thank you."

Just a few weeks ago, a tragedy embedded itself in the tall evergreen forests at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, LA. As a tank slowly slalomed through the trees after sunset on January 14, 1998, the tank commander fell victim to the inherent danger of the military.

Sgt. Donald Wayne Slover passed away that night as he was guiding his tank through the thickest of trees, fog, and rain. The tank's edge clipped and uprooted a tree, which sent it crashing to the ground. The medics, arriving on site only minutes later, felt Sgt. Slover's last pulse.

As one of two military escorts, I was required to accompany the remains from the training area to the burial site, ensuring the proper and unimpaired delivery to the next of kin. The obligation required a two day journey from Fort Hood, TX, to Williamsburg, KY, via Fort Polk, LA. Loading unloading and transportation of the remains required our physical presence. This particular trip entailed a three hour van ride, a connecting flight in Atlanta in route to Knoxville, and a 1 hour drive to Williamsburg, KY.

Upon boarding initial flight out of Houston we informed the flight attendant of our duties. After explaining that it was necessary for us to depart the plane first upon landing (so as not to delay the cargo personnel unloading the casket), two gentlemen offered their seats in the first row of the plane for our last row seats.

This gesture left me speechless. I'm not so sure they even knew our purpose for having to be first off the plane, but with no questions immediately sacrificed their front row seats. After arriving in Atlanta, we were escorted by airport personnel off the plane and down to the tarmac. Standing in our dress green uniforms, we watched as the airline employees carefully unloaded the casket onto the cargo truck. The truck drove off to the departing gate and we made our way back inside the terminal. We met the cargo truck at the departure gate and again were escorted down to the tarmac to supervise the loading of our final flight. Following the

loading, we turned and headed back to the terminal. As we made that walk, I noticed that we were being watched by the crowd awaiting the outbound flight. Not thinking much about it at the time, I scurried out of the cold and awaited the boarding call.

We boarded the plane and again informed the flight attendant of our duties and departure requirements. The flight was booked, every seat filled, and she told us that she would make an announcement upon landing that we were to exit the plane first.

Having been on full flights before, I was certain that this announcement would be ignored. Passengers are normally elbow deep in the overhead compartments as soon as the wheels touch the ground. I was 100% positive I would be the last person off that flight. But I took my seat in the back of the plane, my partner 10 rows in front, and with all of my military skills tried to devise a plan that could project me to the front of that plane upon landing. I concluded that even generals would have a rough time planning such an operation.

As the plane touched down in Knoxville, the flight attendant gave the standard "keep your seat-belts fastened until the captain turns off the seat-belt sign" announcement. She then led into the fact that two military escorts were on-board and that everyone must remain in their seats until we departed the plane. The plane parked and to my astonishment, not a soul moved. I'd never witnessed such absolute silence in my life.

Many of the passengers turned their heads to the rear of the plane but not a sound was made as myself and the other escort donned our jackets, grabbed our bags, and headed down the aisle. I realized then that all eyes were on us. As we neared the exit an older gentleman leaned toward us and broke the silence with something I will never forget, "God bless you both," he said. I am, sir, most truly blessed. I have been afforded the opportunity to work alongside some of the greatest sons and daughters of our nation.

We know and understand that each day presents the possibility of injury and/or death and we take all precautions to prevent them. But we sacrifice that possibility because you depend on us. We train through the roughest of conditions, with minimum sleep and limited resources, anywhere at anytime, to ensure we are always ready. We, sir, are most honored that you entrust us to defend your country.

So I'm writing this letter to say thanks. Thank you Delta Airlines, thank you gentlemen for your seats, thank you sir for your blessings, and thank you America for your support. You see . . . we as soldiers don't expect you to understand the ways in which we live, train, and fight; we just ask for a thank you from time to time. A little appreciation from the people we're defending weighs more than a chestful of awards and medals.

Sgt. Donald Wayne Slover gave his life training to defend the very code of morality and ethics he exemplified and believed in. Sgt. Slover believed in the Army and his country. I worked alongside Sgt. Slover for over a year. He was good at his job and he loved it. He never complained and always did what was asked of him. Sgt. Slover always maintained the courage of his convictions. I hope he laid to rest knowing he was appreciated. If not, we failed as a nation and we owe it to him.

Sgt. Slover . . . thank you! You will be missed!

DANIEL ASHLEY,
1-10 CAVALRY:
READY AND FORWARD.

TRIBUTE TO ELSIE BUCHENAU

HON. GEORGE P. RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 20, 1998

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Elsie Buchenau for her dedicated service to the Madera County Central Committee and to the Republican Party.

Elsie Buchenau was born on October 5, 1907 in Firebaugh, California. Her family consisting of four girls and one boy, moved to a Madera vineyard in the La Vina area in 1912. She attended La Vina Grammar School, then Madera High School where she graduated in 1924. After working for a prominent attorney and a Realtor she moved to San Francisco for five years. She then married Herb Buchenau, a local cattleman and farmer, in 1937 and then moved to the Buchenau home ranch northeast of Madera, where she still lives.

Mrs. Elsie Buchenau has been active in the Republican Party for many years and served as chairperson for the Madera County Central Committee for eight years, and vice president of the California Republican Party. She has also been a member of the Madera Republican Women and a delegate and twice an alternate to the Republican National Convention.

Elsie Buchenau is also a member of the Madera County Cattleman's Association and was named Cattle woman of the Year in 1979. In 1994, Elsie Buchenau was named Farmer of the Year by the Madera District Chamber of Commerce. Mrs. Buchenau has also volunteered her time with the Madera Community Hospital League and the St. Vincent de Paul Store, which supports Catholic charities.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I pay tribute to Elsie Buchenau for her decades of service to the Republican Party, the Madera County Central Committee, and to her community. I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing Elsie Buchenau best wishes for the future.

WINFIELD SCOTT STRATTON: A
GREAT HUMANITARIAN

HON. JOEL HEFLEY

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 20, 1998

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, July 22, 1998, will mark the 150 anniversary of the birth of Winfield Scott Stratton, a great Colorado humanitarian.

In Colorado, this date will be recognized by 25 different events celebrating his life and good deeds. It is appropriate that we commemorate the deeds of this distinguished humanitarian from Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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