

Mrs. Rheney is a 1949 graduate of Jefferson-Hillman School of Nursing in Birmingham, Alabama. Her first job was as director of nursing at a tuberculosis sanitarium in Decatur, Georgia. After her move to South Carolina, she accepted positions in the surgical unit of Roper Hospital and later as pediatric head nurse at Saint Francis Hospital in Charleston, South Carolina.

Upon moving to Orangeburg, South Carolina in 1954, Mrs. Rheney immediately became active in the community. She held memberships in the Junior Service League, the Medical Alliance, and the Salvation Army Advisory Board. In the 1960's and 1970's she was an active supporter and volunteer for many activities at Wade Hampton Academy, where her children were students. Mrs. Rheney and her husband, Dr. John Rheney, Jr. are the parents of four children: John III, a local dentist; Betsy, a human resources representative in Aiken; Bruce, a local bank vice-president; and David, a Greenville attorney. The Rheney's raised their children in a loving, Christian home, encouraging them to love God, one another, and themselves.

As South Carolina's Mother of the Year, Mrs. Rheney will represent the state in Portland, Oregon in April at the national convention of American Mothers, Inc., a non-profit, interfaith organization founded for the purpose of developing and strengthening the moral and spiritual foundation of America's families. I am privileged to serve parts of Orangeburg county in this august body, a county which has seen three other of its outstanding women attain the state's Mother of the Year honor. Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring Mrs. Joyce Rheney, for her outstanding work as an exemplary mother and unselfish community servant.

HONORING GEORGE BECKER

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, on February 28, 2001, one of this nation's most distinguished and able labor leaders will officially retire. George Becker, the president of the United Steelworkers of America, will formally mark the conclusion of a career that spans 57 years.

During his tenure as the president of the Steelworkers union, he has reinvigorated the union's political presence as a force in the national debate about trade, globalization, and its effects on working men and women. He has been an outspoken critic of free trade agreements, such as NAFTA, that have resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of American manufacturing jobs and a weakening of America's manufacturing and industrial base. He has been a fierce proponent of workers' rights and human rights, especially in China, Mexico, and other developing nations around the world.

George Becker literally grew up across the street from a steel mill; the Granite City mill in his hometown of Granite City, Illinois. He went to work in the mill in the summer of 1944. Besides Granite City Steel, Becker also worked as a crane operator at General Steel Castings, and as an assembler at Fisher Body. He also served on active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Becker became active in USWA Local 4804 at Dow Chemical's aluminum rolling mill in Madison, Illinois, where he worked as an inspector. Over the years, he was elected by his co-workers as local union treasurer, vice president, and president. As a result of his hard work and leadership, Becker was later appointed as a USWA staff representative.

In 1975, Becker came to the USWA's International headquarters in Pittsburgh as a staff technician in the union's Safety and Health Department. He helped to establish some of the first national health standards adopted later by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for workers exposed to lead, arsenic, and other toxic substances.

Becker also led the union's collective bargaining in the aluminum industry as chair of the USWA's Aluminum Industry Conference. Later, he also headed the Steelworkers' organizing program and led major corporate campaigns, including a worldwide campaign against Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation and the return to work of 1,600 Steelworkers after a 20-month lockout. The Ravenswood struggle was later chronicled in the 1999 book, titled, "Ravenswood: The Steelworkers' Victory and the Revival of American Labor," by Tom Juravich and Kate Bronfenbrenner.

In 1985, Becker was elected as international vice president for administration. He was re-elected to that position in 1989. He also served as administrative assistant to Lynn Williams after Williams became international secretary in 1977 and international president in 1983.

In November, 1993, Becker was elected international president of the United Steelworkers and was reelected to a second term in November, 1997.

Becker's presidency of the Steelworkers has included many milestones for the union.

In June, 1995, Becker won the support of his Board of Directors to reorganize the Steelworkers from 18 districts in the U.S. into nine districts, increasing efficiency and political strength. In July, 1995, Becker engineered the merger of the 98,000-member United Rubber Workers with the Steelworkers. In 1997, the 40,000-member Aluminum, Brick, and Glass Workers Union also merged with the Steelworkers.

Under George Becker's leadership, the Steelworkers won significant settlements in strikes at Bridgestone/Firestone, Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel, and Newport News Shipbuilding Company. The struggle at Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel restored a defined benefit pension plan for 4,500 members. The struggle at Newport news Shipbuilding also won significant increases in workers' wages and pension benefits.

Becker also expanded the Steelworkers' political strength by creating a Rapid Response program, which informs and activates local union members to lobby Congress on issues crucial to working men and women. In 1998, Steelworkers generated over 170,000 letters to Congress opposing so-called "fast track" trade negotiating authority, which played a major part in defeating the measure. Becker also initiated a Washington internship program for the union, which brings rank and file members to Washington for an intensive 12-week long session of education about the workings of Congress along with practical experience in the art of lobbying on behalf of the union's legislative agenda.

Becker has become a regular fixture in Washington with frequent appearances and testimony before Congressional committees, the U.S. International Trade Commission, the Administration, and other government agencies. As one of the vice-presidents of the AFL-CIO, he was instrumental in reforming the labor federation and was a key supporter of John Sweeney as AFL-CIO president in 1995.

On the world stage, Becker is an executive committee member of the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF) and chairman of the world rubber council of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine, and General Workers' Unions (ICEM).

In 1998, Becker was appointed by President Clinton to the President's Export Council and the U.S. Trade and Environmental Policy Advisory Committee; both important forums which he used to speak out on behalf of workers' rights. Becker also served as a member of the Congressional Trade Deficit Review Commission, which conducted extensive hearings in Washington and across the nation on the causes and consequences of the nation's burgeoning trade deficits. Becker's leadership ensured that Steelworkers were prominent in the protests marking the Seattle WTO Ministerial meeting in December, 1999.

Mr. Speaker, George Becker's success as a labor leader has been because of his intelligence, skills, and tenacity. Because of all of those attributes and above all, because he has never forgotten where he came from, his career has improved the lives of millions of American workers and their families. I hope my colleagues will join me in congratulating Steelworkers union president George Becker upon his retirement and for a lifetime of dedicated service to not only the men and women of his beloved Steelworkers union, but all working men and women.

SALUTING THE TUSKEGEE
AIRMEN

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 28, 2001

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, February marks Black History Month and its arrival has afforded us the opportunity to spotlight some of the most courageous men in our nation's history. I am referring to the Tuskegee Airmen, African-Americans who were asked to simultaneously fight the institutionalized segregation of their homeland and the battle hardened pilots fielded by the Luftwaffe of dreaded Nazi Germany.

On the very site where some nine thousand Republic Thunderbolt fighters were built during World War II, a permanent tribute has been created by the American Airpower Museum in Farmingdale, Long Island that salutes the valor and sacrifice of the Tuskegee Airmen. A full size replica of their P-51 fighter welcomes the museum visitor and helps explain the story of these amazing airmen.

I was honored and pleased to be able to join members of the Tuskegee Airmen, and the many friends of Republic Airport and my constituents in dedicating this exhibit during Black History Month.

Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 15,500 sorties and completed nearly 1,600 missions