

Dubbed simply as the irrepressible Mr. Ralph, he involved himself in virtually creating the esthetic appearance of those who came to his beauty salon to design a better look of themselves and thus achieve a more confident self-esteem.

Out of his hard work and diligence, coupled with his business acumen and personal warmth, his fame as Miami's hairstylist par excellence emerged. Under the aegis of his salon, Hairstyles by Mr. Ralph, he became the legendary cosmetologist whose advice on the challenges of beauty culture and intricacies of hairstyling was sought far and wide.

His tremendous entrepreneurship ultimately propelled him to his engagement with the well-being of Miami's innercity residents. In 1983 he was appointed President of the Allapattah Merchants Association where he superbly managed the development and construction of a private/public business venture toward the retailing of beauty products and the consolidation of a series of pharmaceutical operations. While he exercised optimum vigilance over the business aspects of the Association, he became involved with the overall amelioration of the residents in the innercity.

Sensitized by the awesome hurdles which poor families have to contend with in getting affordable housing and access much-needed capital, Mr. Ralph Packingham became the Executive Director of the Word of Life Community Development Corporation under the auspices of the Word of Life Missionary Baptist Church. At the most recent gathering, in Liberty City tendered to acknowledge his countless contributions to our community, the Rev. Richard P. Dunn II, his pastor, described him as "... a man among men (who) has impacted the lives of thousands of people."

His commitment to affordable housing paved the way for his becoming the driving force of detached, affordable single family homes in Liberty City. The first two of these affordable homes were dedicated last Monday, December 10, 2001. More poor families from Miami's innercity will soon move in and live in their respective dream homes via the low-cost affordable housing initiative born out of the vision and fortitude of this outstanding community leader.

Ever since I have known this quintessential trailblazer who leads by the fortitude of his exemplary sacrifices, Mr. Ralph has always been at the forefront of ensuring equality of opportunity in our community. Countless others have been touched by his unflinching advocacy for those who could least fend for themselves. Though currently ailing and confined to a wheel chair, this 72-year old dynamic personality goes about his leadership role over the faith-based Word of Life CDC in reaching out to poor families, engendering in them genuine hope and optimism.

Buoyed by his sterling Faith in a providential God, he has been and continues to be our community's superlative steward and consummate activist. He is a decent and caring man who thoroughly understands the accouterments of power and leadership by exercising them alongside the mandate of his conviction and the wisdom of his conscience. The uniqueness of his *modus operandi* genuinely personifies his credo that " \* \* \* you gotta do a lot of praying and a little politicking" to ameliorate the lives of others.

Mr. Ralph Packingham epitomizes a refreshing advocate whose unflinching compassion

and resilient spirit appeal to our noblest character. Indeed, I feel so privileged but deeply humbled to represent him in the hallowed halls of Congress.

CONGRATULATING STEPHEN JOHNSON AND DENNIS PARKER ON THEIR ESSAYS ABOUT "WHAT MAKES AMERICA GREAT"

HON. MARCY KAPTUR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 18, 2001*

Mr. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, each year Crestwood Elementary School in Swanton, Ohio spends Veterans' Day honoring local veterans. It is an insightful and moving day-long series of events in which both the children and adults fully participate. The 2001 observance featured two essays describing "What Makes America Great" which I would like to enter into the RECORD. The first is by 6th grader Stephen Johnson and the second by 6th grader Dennis Parker.

Three things that make America great are: freedom, the land and its climate, and the people.

First of all freedom makes America great because we can choose our government. For example we can elect candidates for president, vice president, mayor, trustee, secretary, and various other offices within our country's governmental system. We have the freedom to go where we want, and how we're going to get there. We also have freedom to buy, and drive what we want. For example, we can buy airplane tickets, cars, houses, and many other things. We are even allowed to choose what we want to do with our lives. For example we could be a doctor, nurse, dentist, president, vice president, and many different jobs within our country.

Secondly America's land and its climate make America an abundant and bountiful country to live in. The land provides us with minerals, food, water, shelter, wildlife, and the clothes such as cotton. The climate provides this country with sunshine, darkness, warmth, coldness, and the four seasons. The climate has caused America to form oceans, mountains, valleys, plateaus, and hills. The natural resources give us wood for pencils, lumber, paper, and fire, oil for cars and other automobiles, water for drinking, and land for farming.

Thirdly the people make America great because history and events are based on people. The people are faithful, and loyal to their country. There are many different kinds of people living in America. The history, and events are based on people because there was the Boston Tea Party, World War I, World War II, and there was the tragedy that happened just recently. The people are faithful, and loyal to their country by recycling, burning waste, not polluting the air, and many other things to help our environment. There are many different kinds of people living in America because in America you are free to pick your job, your house, and many other things that make America a great place to live in.

Here is the second essay:

If you want to know what makes America great, then take a look around you. I think people took America for granted until the terrorists' acts on September 11, 2001. In a heartbeat, innocent lives were destroyed.

Instead of television heroes like Batman and Superman, they became firefighters, po-

licemen, and just ordinary people like moms and dads, every day Americans just like you and me.

Our country's freedom was taken for granted by Americans that was won by our veterans and forefathers. We fought in wars to end injustices, communism, and nationalism. Now, we are trying to stop terrorists, and our country is united even more.

People show their love and patriotism for our country by flying flags, giving blood, money and food to people in need. They don't care about how much money we have or our skin color. They just want to help out. That is why America is the best country in the world.

If you want to know what freedom is, then look around you. We have freedom of speech, religion, and education. We can go to school, speak, and pray without being punished. We aren't told what job to have, where to live, and what to do. We have many laws, but they are not to punish us, they are to protect us.

America is great because we can vote for whomever we want in a secret ballot. We are allowed to choose our president, governor, or mayor without being punished.

So basically, America is cared for and so are its people. They want to help America and make it even more united. Our veterans played a very important part in American history because they helped us gain freedom.

So remember every time you say the Pledge of Allegiance, or sing the national anthem, be proud, and think of our real heroes. We are united because we are free and we are free because we are United. God Bless America!

HONORING THE DEARBORN/DEARBORN HEIGHTS CHAPTER OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 18, 2001*

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters on their 50th Anniversary.

Recognized by the National League of Women Voters on December 19th, 1951, the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter has fulfilled and continues to fulfill its primary goal of encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government, working to increase understanding of major public issues and influencing public policy through education and advocacy.

The Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter has provided numerous services to the community since their inception in 1951. In 1952, they provided election-day childcare in 63 precincts, allowing parents to vote. They helped establish the Northwestern Child Guidance Clinic in 1963. Throughout the years, they have worked with ABC News on election-day exit polling. These fine women have helped pass library proposals and establish a diversity committee which works to engage local students in community discussions. Mr. Speaker, these women have served their community well.

Though they are a non-partisan group, the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights Chapter of the League of Women's Voters is extremely political, focusing their efforts on child health and