

know as the Big Red One. I recommend that all in this House take the time to view it. As Mr. Merli recounts the events of that night in Belgium to Roger Mudd, the emotional loss of his assistant gunner, whom Mr. Merli views throughout time as the real hero that night, tears welled up in his eyes. Selfless as always, Mr. Merli states that the true heroes are the American soldiers who did not come back and gave their lives in the service of their nation.

Upon returning from the war, Gino Merli served our nation's veterans for thirty-four years as an adjudication officer at the Veterans Administration Center in Plains Township, Pennsylvania. Service and sacrifice were the foundations upon which he lived his life. This nation has been truly blessed by men such as Mr. Merli who have sustained us in times of war and healed the veteran in times of peace.

In a letter to an appreciative citizen, Mr. Merli wrote:

Not everyone can be a Medal of Honor recipient. But everyone can take pride in himself—have pride in his heritage. We must always keep trying to better ourselves and our surrounding and we must never quit. Always remember America is you and me.

I want to assure the many military men and women from Northeastern Pennsylvania and throughout the country who are serving in harm's way, that this nation will never break the sacred promise between the veterans and the people for whom they have sacrificed.

Mr. Merli fought the good fight in peacetime and war. He will be sorely missed, but his actions and sacrifice and service to his country will never be forgotten. From a grateful American people and nation we extend our condolences to Mr. Merli's family. Godspeed Pfc Merli, we know that you will hold the high ground until relieved.

Mr. Speaker, I request that Mr. Merli's Medal of Honor Citation be included as part of the permanent CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for future generations to honor and read.

The President of the United States in the name of The Congress takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to:

MERLI, GINO J.—Rank and organization: Private First Class, U.S. Army, 18th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division. Place and date: Near Sars la Bruyere, Belgium, 4-5 September 1944. Entered service at: Peckville, Pa. Birth: Scranton, Pa. G.O. No.: 64, 4 August 1945.

Citation: He was serving as a machine gunner in the vicinity of Sars la Bruyere, Belgium, on the night of 4-5 September 1944, when his company was attacked by a superior German force. Its position was overrun and he was surrounded when our troops were driven back by overwhelming numbers and firepower. Disregarding the fury of the enemy fire concentrated on him he maintained his position, covering the withdrawal of our riflemen and breaking the force of the enemy pressure. His assistant machine gunner was killed and the position captured; the other 8 members of the section were forced to surrender. Pfc. Merli slumped down beside the dead assistant gunner and feigned death. No sooner had the enemy group withdrawn than he was up and firing in all directions. Once more his position was taken and the captors found 2 apparently lifeless bodies. Throughout the night Pfc. Merli stayed at his weapon. By daybreak the enemy had suffered heavy losses, and as our troops launched an assault, asked for a truce. Our negotiating party, who accepted the German

surrender, found Pfc. Merli still at his gun. On the battlefield lay 52 enemy dead, 19 of whom were directly in front of the gun. Pfc. Merli's gallantry and courage, and the losses and confusion that he caused the enemy, contributed materially to our victory.

A RESOLUTION REGARDING THE
55TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
LYNWOOD CHAMBER OF COM-
MERCE, CA, AND ITS OUT-
STANDING LEADERSHIP FOR
LYNWOOD BUSINESS OWNERS

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 12, 2002

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, whereas, the Lynwood Chamber of Commerce, California, was founded in 1946, and W.W. Jones, principal of the high school, was elected the first president of the chamber, and Jack Weaver was elected the first secretary;

Whereas, 2001 marks the 55th anniversary of the Lynwood Chamber of Commerce, California, an organization that has provided outstanding assistance to its members, helping their businesses flourish;

Whereas, the Lynwood Chamber of Commerce, California represents over 1,500 home-based, commercial, industrial, and manufacturing businesses in Lynwood;

Whereas, the Lynwood Chamber of Commerce, California continues to promote area businesses through functions such as the Annual Business and Economic Development Expo;

Whereas, the Lynwood Chamber of Commerce, California hosts important events for business owners, including forums for minority and women business owners and the Annual Legislative Conference, which allows businesses to meet with their elected officials from the local to Federal level; and

Whereas, the Lynwood Chamber of Commerce, California provides youth scholarships, including the Mr. and Miss Lynwood Scholarship Competition and the Annual Educational Golf Classic, which have generated over \$150,000 in the past years.

Now therefore, be it recognized that Congresswoman JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD proudly recognizes that the Lynwood Chamber of Commerce, California serves the businesses of Lynwood with distinction; and provides important scholarships for children and assists business owners, including minorities and women, to promote their businesses.

FATHERS ARE IMPORTANT

HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 12, 2002

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of America's fathers.

Mr. Speaker, fathers are important. They're important to our communities, our civic institutions and most of all they are important to their families, especially their children. Tonight, 40 percent of American children will go to sleep in a home without their father. Forty mil-

lion children will see another day come and go without hearing the sound of their father's voice or playing catch with their Dad in the backyard or having their father tuck them into bed. And what's even more sad is that it's not because their fathers went on a business trip or had to work the late shift. It's because their fathers are gone. And for these children tonight is going to be a lot like last night and may be a lot like tomorrow night. Forty million American children have not seen their fathers in over a year.

Mr. Speaker, being a father has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. Watching my children grow and teaching them right from wrong has given me more joy than I ever thought possible. Just this last year, I became a grandfather for the first time. Watching my son be a father to his son has reconfirmed for me the importance and joys of fatherhood. I salute the many single mothers who work hard to support and care for their children. But, fathers are important. They can't be replaced.

RECOGNITION OF CARL "BRONKO"
STANKOVIC

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 12, 2002

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I recognize Mr. Carl "Bronko" Stankovic, a proud World War II veteran and dear friend of mine. Bronko has recently brought to my attention an inspirational poem written by his friend Bev Freeman, of Morgan Hill, California, during the Second World War. Bev passed away last year leaving behind not only loved ones but strong friendships forged during the war. After the funeral, Bronko and Bev's daughter, Carolyn Turner, came across a poem written by Bev and two members of his Tank Battalion that embodied the war experience not only for Bronko, but many other veterans.

This poem speaks powerfully to the uncertainty and fear faced by World War II combatants. The emotions it represents rings true with Bronko, and the hundreds of veterans he has shared this poem with. Bev's poem has been copied and given out at reunions since its discovery, and now I would like to share it with the Congress of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I submit this untitled poem as a tribute to Bev's tank crew and to the memory of all our lost World War II veterans:

Look, God I have never spoken to you.
But now, I want to say, "How do you do?"
You see, God, they told me you didn't exist.
And, like a fool, I believed all this.

Last night from my turret I saw your sky.
I figured then they told me a lie.
Had I taken time to see things you made,
I'd have known they weren't calling a spade
a spade.

I wonder, God, if you'd shake my hand?
Somehow I feel that you will understand.
Funny I had to come to this Hellish place
Before I had time to see your face!

Well, I guess there isn't much more to say.
But I'm sure glad God that I met you today.
I guess the hour will soon be here.
I'm not afraid since I know you're near.

There's the signal; Well, God, I've got to go.
I like you a lot—this I want you to know.