

"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."

MERLI HELD POSITION SO HIS UNIT COULD
ESCAPE

(By David Falchek)

At age of 18, Gino Merli was barely an adult and hadn't even graduated from high school.

Yet he became a hero.

Before he faced his greatest challenge as a gunner with the 1st Infantry Division, he had survived landing on Normandy and two subsequent battle injuries.

Pvt. Merli was a machine gunner near Sars la Bruyere, Belgium, on the night of Sept. 4, 1944, when German forces attacked.

As the outnumbered and outgunned GIs started retreating, Pvt. Merli held his position to provide cover fire as a tightening circle of German troops closed in on him. Tracer bullets and grenades blew up before him. His assistant gunner was killed, the cooling system of his gun was destroyed and death appeared certain. He slumped next to his dead colleagues, feigning mortal injury. German soldiers poked the bodies and turned them over with bayonets. Pvt. Merli didn't budge.

When the Germans advanced to pursue U.S. troops, Pvt. Merli sprang up, shooting in all directions. As new waves of Germans approached, he repeated the shot/play dead sequence.

In a speech in Scranton in 1945, Sgt. Milton V. Kokoszka recalled that horrible night.

"I saw (Pvt. Merli) had not been taken prisoner and after we moved some distance I would hear our machine gun open fire again," he said. "I saw different enemy groups move into the emplacement and each time the gun would stop, and then start firing again as soon as they left. He had pretended to be dead."

During the night, he watched a silhouette of a German soldier in the moonlight. The German knew his routine, Pvt. Merli thought, and was waiting for him to move. Although technically the enemy, Pvt. Merli felt a connection to the soldier he referred to as "that German boy" for the rest of his life.

The Germans sustained heavy losses at the nearby front, and 700 surrendered. The allies found Pvt. Merli the next day. He was covered in the assistant gunner's blood and his clothing was in tatters from bayonet jabs.

Around him were 52 dead Germans, 19 directly in front of his gun.

Pvt. Merli's only request was to visit a church.

He prayed for the men he had killed and for the safety of the German soldier he had watched through the night.

Mr. Speaker, we see the bravery and dedication of Gino Merli being carried on today in the men and women who are fighting our new war on terrorism. All of us in Northeastern Pennsylvania are proud to claim Mr. Merli as one of our own, and I join my fellow residents of Northeastern Pennsylvania in sending best wishes and condolences to his family.

IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION FOR
THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION,
THE ROTTERDAM CONVENTION,
AND THE PROTOCOL TO THE 1979
CONVENTION ON LONG-RANGE
TRANSBOUNDARY AIR POLLU-
TION ON PERSISTENT ORGANIC
POLLUTANTS

HON. PAUL E. GILLMOR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2002

Mr. GILLMOR. I am pleased to join my colleague, Mr. GOODLATTE, in introducing today by request the Administration's implementing legislation for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, and the Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Trans-boundary Air Pollution on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

The Stockholm Convention was adopted on May 22, 2001, after many years of international negotiation under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, and it establishes an international framework for regulating the production, use, and disposal of persistent organic pollutants, including polychlorinated biphenyls, PCBs, and dioxin. The United States signed the Stockholm Convention over 1 year ago, along with over 110 other countries, but the United States cannot ratify the treaty until the Senate provides its advice and consent, and until sufficient authority has been granted through Federal legislation to ensure that the mandates of the agreement can be enforced.

On April 11, 2002, the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, submitted to the Congress legislation to implement the Stockholm Convention, the Rotterdam Convention, and the Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution on Persistent Organic Pollutants. This legislation amends the Toxic Substances Control Act, TSCA, as well as the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) by providing the EPA with the authority to eliminate or restrict the production, use and release of 12 chemicals that can adversely affect human health because they are toxic; they persist in the environment for long periods of time; they circulate globally; and they biomagnify and accumulate in foods consumed by humans.

Specifically, the bill amends TSCA to prohibit or severely restrict the use of Aldrin, Chlordane, Dieldrin, Endrin, Heptachlor, Hexachlorobenzene, Mirex, Toxaphene, PCBs and DDT, while providing specific limited exemptions for their continued use. In the event that these chemicals continue to be used in accordance with an exemption, this legislation requires a certificate to accompany the chemicals providing detailed information. The legislation also provides EPA with the authority to collect additional information from manufacturers to assist in evaluating additional chemicals for potential addition to the restricted list in the future, and to prohibit the exportation from the United States of these banned or severely restricted products, unless the exportation complies with specific conditions and restrictions established by the EPA. The bill also requires

exporters of listed substances to provide prior notice to EPA of all exports and to include additional labeling, and the bill similarly amends FIFRA to prohibit the use, sale and exportation of the prohibited or restricted chemicals that are pesticide active ingredients.

Today, I am pleased to introduce by request the Administration's legislative package that, once enacted, will allow the United States to ratify the underlying treaties. As the chairman of the Environment and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, I look forward to working with the administration, my colleagues in the House and other body, and all interested parties, in putting a package together that we can send to the White House soon. As we proceed, I will keep an open mind on the need to make improvements to the bill I'm introducing today. This can and should be bipartisan legislation that will demonstrate the United States' leadership in the international environmental arena.

A TRIBUTE TO STEVEN
KAPLANSKY: A TRUE NEW YORK-
ER

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 13, 2002

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of Steven Kaplansky in recognition of his long time commitment to his community.

Steve was born in Manhattan and he grew up in Queens, amidst the historic Bowie House and Quaker Meeting Hall. Here, Steve learned important lessons of cultural diversity and love of community, which he took with him throughout his life. He went on to receive his college education at Long Island University, where he majored in sociology and history. He earned his masters degree from the Hunter School of Social Work, and became a New York State certified social worker.

Aside from two years which he spent building community centers in Florida, Steven Kaplansky has spent his entire professional career in New York City. As an assistant director of the Flushing YHMA, he developed programs with the Lexington School for the Deaf and the Association For Help To Retarded Children, as well as an interracial youth council with Baptist churches. In 1976, he became the youngest executive director of a YHMA, and developed nontraditional programs, such as enriched and senior housing for the elderly, the only kosher Battered Women's Shelter in America, community services programs for those being discharged from mental institutions, interracial councils, neighborhood preservation projects and one of the first local development corporations in New York City.

Steven's nonprofit work has been equally impressive. He was instrumental in establishing the Sam Levenson Cultural Arts Foundation and helped to establish One World One Heart, a nonprofit organization, which provides cultural, educational and neighborhood enrichment programs through music for communities-at-large. A one-time board member of the Local Development Corporation of East New York and a current board member of the