

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE JOHN FOSTER, SHERIFF OF JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 2003

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a dedicated public servant, the late John Foster, Sheriff of Johnson County, Kansas, who passed away on March 6th after a brief but valiant battle with pancreatic cancer.

John Foster, who died at age 67, began his career in the Johnson County Sheriff's Department in 1956, then took the post of assistant police chief in Fairway, Kansas, four years later. He became chief of police in Lenexa, Kansas, in 1971 and retired briefly twenty years later. A year later, in 1992, he returned to the Sheriff's Department as undersheriff. He was elected to a four-year term as Sheriff in 2000.

Doctors diagnosed Sheriff Foster's cancer in January. On February 21st, two weeks after they told him he might live from two weeks to a year, John told county officials that his disease was terminal. Undersheriff Frank Denning assumed Foster's duties on an acting basis the following week.

I got to know John Foster well during my twelve years as Johnson County District Attorney. John was my friend. He had a wonderful sense of humor. He always stayed close to the people he served, and was a profile in humane, progressive law enforcement at the local level. He mentored scores of younger law enforcement officers during his forty-six years of public service and leaves his home county, and its residents, a much better place as a result of the time he spent serving and fostering it.

Mr. Speaker, John Foster is survived by his wife, Karen Foster, five children—Margaret, Diane, Susie, Jan and Todd—and four granddaughters. I join with them in mourning this profound loss and place into the RECORD an article from the Kansas City Star that memorializes a dedicated and valuable law enforcement and public safety official.

[From the Kansas City (KS) Star, Mar. 7, 2003]

JOHNSON COUNTY SHERIFF DIES OF PANCREATIC CANCER

(By Richard Espinoza)

Johnson County Sheriff John Foster, who spent almost half a century in law enforcement, died at home early Thursday of pancreatic cancer.

Doctors diagnosed Foster, 67, in January. On Feb. 21, two weeks after doctors told Foster he might live two weeks to a year, he told county officials that the disease was terminal. Undersheriff Frank Denning assumed Foster's duties the following week.

Voters elected Foster, a Republican, to a four-year term in 2000. Now Johnson County Republicans must nominate a successor and send the person's name to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, a Democrat.

He began his career at the Sheriff's Department in 1956, then took the post of assistant police chief in Fairway four years later. He became chief in Lenexa in 1971 and briefly retired in 1991. The following year, he returned to the Sheriff's Department as undersheriff.

Colleagues said Foster's main goal was keeping fellow law enforcement officers

happy and well-trained so they could take good care of their community.

"He loved officers," Fairway Police Chief Kevin Cavanaugh said. "He loved what they stood for and what they represent. He did everything in his power to teach people and be an example of how to put their best foot forward in the best possible way."

Foster helped the Sheriff's Department win raises to reduce the number of deputies who left for better-paying jobs, switched to better-looking uniforms and constantly trained a new generation of law-enforcement leaders. "He'd accomplished a lot, but I know he wasn't done," Johnson County District Attorney Paul Morrison said.

In Topeka, the Kansas House approved a resolution Thursday honoring Foster for his nearly 50 years of public service in law enforcement. A copy will be given to his family. It was sponsored by House members from Johnson County.

Sen. Karin Brownlee, an Olathe Republican, said a similar resolution would be introduced in the Senate next week.

Johnson County Commission Chairwoman Annabeth Surbaugh issued a statement praising Foster's encouragement and support.

"The county has lost a great man," Surbaugh wrote, "a man whose strong and steady step never wavered, a man whose dedication and commitment to this community was unshakable, a man whose wisdom and guidance were a source of inspiration and comfort to so many."

Many law officers visited Foster at home during his last days to tell him how he had encouraged them in their careers.

Lenexa Police Chief Ellen Hanson, whom Foster hired in 1975, recalled the way he helped people succeed.

"He was a confidence builder, but not falsely," Hanson said. "I think he had a great ability to see people's strengths and build on them."

Colleagues remembered his love for teaching, and several said he passed on some piece of wisdom in nearly every conversation.

"Every time I spoke to him," Cavanaugh said, "whether it was something to do with law enforcement or on a personal level, I always learned something. It seemed as if he always wanted to teach."

Some of it was serious, like the sharp distinction he drew between mistakes of the head—those that are rectified easily—and mistakes of the heart, which show a troubling lack of ethics.

Other times he couched a lesson in humorous "Fosterisms," like the warning he frequently issued on what he called the "three Bs of booze, broads and bills."

"The one thing that can cause you trouble if you don't handle them correctly is that," Hanson quoted Foster. "If you handle those things with honesty and integrity, you're not going to have a problem."

Foster was a life member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Kansas City Metropolitan Chiefs and Sheriffs Association. He was a member of the Kansas Association of Police Chiefs, the Johnson County Chiefs and Sheriffs Association and the Kansas Sheriffs Association.

Foster taught as an adjunct instructor at Johnson County Community College, and he was a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

He lived in Johnson County all his life. He attended Hickory Grove Grade School in Shawnee and Shawnee Mission Rural High School, now Shawnee Mission North. He earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master's in administration of justice, both from Wichita State University.

He was a member and past president of the Lenexa Rotary Club.

Foster is survived by his wife, Karen M. Foster; five children, Margaret, Diane, Susie, Jan and Todd; and four granddaughters.

Instead of flowers, Foster's family suggests donations to a scholarship fund for law-enforcement families that they plan to establish soon.

The family was making funeral plans Thursday.

OUR PATRIOT SAILORS: HONORING CAPTAIN JAMES PARESE

HON. VITO FOSSELLA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 13, 2003

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, we wake up every morning to our newspapers filled with stories of possible war, of tragic loss of our astronauts, of heightened warnings of terrorist attacks and of dangerous international dictators. In all, Americans are finding it a difficult time to be confronted every day with these tragedies, uncertainties and fears.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, during times like these, it is all the more vital to our national spirit to tell Americans about uplifting and comforting stories. We need to remind ourselves of our national qualities for which we are so unique—patriotism, courage and generosity for our fellow man.

The story I tell you today, you will not have read about in your local paper, nor watched on TV, because this is the story of an unsung hero, a man who showed unwavering bravery during the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001.

I rise today to honor one of my constituents, James Parese, who is the Captain of the Staten Island Ferry, "Samuel I Newhouse". On that terrible morning on September 11, Captain Parese was one of the countless private citizens on maritime vessels around Manhattan who immediately responded to an emergency message. Cackling across marine radios in New York's harbor—the Coast Guard summoned all boats and their crews to abandon their usual duties and respond to extraordinary needs in the New York waterways.

Captain Parese explains that day himself best when he said, quote, The subways were down, and they closed the bridges. We were basically the only way out. Us and the smaller ferries, the police boats and the tugs. I couldn't believe the amount of tugs; there were a sea of tugboats coming from Staten Island heading for Manhattan.

Since September 11th, we have heard so many human stories of tragedy, heroism, loss and miracles. We've heard the brave deeds of the New York firefighters and police officers. We will forever owe them our deepest gratitude.

And today we honor one of America's maritime heroes—one of hundreds of private men and women who selflessly and quietly answered the call from the Coast Guard for "all available boats". The miraculous rescue and response effort by water has also permanently altered our nation's official approach to defending our homeland security along our coastline.

The South Street Seaport Museum in New York City put together an exhibit to bring to light the historic maritime evacuation of Manhattan on September 11. I learned of these