

team had a winning chemistry. The Cowgirls won all 24 of their regular season games, a milestone in school history. Games at Maybee Complex were some of the largest attended events the Cowgirls had ever seen, and soon Hardin Simmons University led the division in home attendance. With great talent and wide support, the Cowgirls attained their first number one ranking in the nation since becoming an NCAA member.

But the Cowgirls did not stop there. They soon played some of the most competitive teams in the American Southwest conference and triumphantly won their fifth straight AFC tournament title. And their win made them one of only two undefeated teams in the Nation, earning them a spot in the coveted NCAA Division III basketball tournament and a number one ranking in the Nation by the ESPN USA Today Women's Basketball Coaches Association.

The Cowgirls fought a tough battle at the NCAA championships. In the end, however, they were unable to win the title. But as Vince Lombardi once said, "The spirit, the will to win and the will to excel are the things that endure. These qualities are so much more important than the events that occur." Trophy or not, they have already won the most important prize, the pride, the joy, and the honor of representing their university and community for all of America to see. To me and those I represent, you, the Cowgirls, are already the biggest winners of all.

None of these victories could have been achieved without the incredible team work that these 15 young women have demonstrated. From Abilene and San Angelo, Brady, and Stephenville, and all over the district, these women came from all areas, and through their hard work and efforts they became more than just teammates. They became life-long friends. Their names will be remembered with pride at their school and within our communities: Sarah Allen, Kendra Anderson, KraTaura Buckner, Diane Cox, Sara Dickey, Lauren Harris, Hannah Jones, Veronica Jones, Erika Keese, Diana Martinez, Leigh Ann Neal, Keila Remmele, Laura Ricci, and Terri Robinson. We will remember your victories in our hearts and our memories.

The team as a whole has an incredible spirit, but one player in particular has achieved notable recognition for her abilities on the team and for women's basketball at large. Kendra Anderson has been named the Division III National Player of the Year by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association. She has been the American Southwest Conference's most valuable player for the third straight year, the conference tournament most valuable player for the fourth straight year, and the first team All American and All South Region for the third year. She was also a WBCA All Star Challenge participant with 17 Division I All Stars. She scored an average of 20.1

points and 10 rebounds per game this season alone. Kendra has forever raised the bar of excellence to a new standard for her friends and teammates to follow.

We all know that a basketball team can have all the best players in the world, but without direction and guidance, strong leadership and vision, the team cannot develop and grow. That guiding force was first-year head coach, Shanna Briggs. Miss Briggs brought out the best in her players, sharpened their strengths and improved their weaknesses. The Hardin Simmons women's basketball program will continue in future years to prosper under her leadership and the dedication of its players.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to give the recognition today to the 2003 Hardin Simmons University Cowgirls, the hard work that the players and coaches have done to make this team the champions they are. They have learned, as Grace Lichenstein once said, that "your opponent in the end is never really the player on the other side of the net or the swimmer in the next lane or the team on the other side of the field or even the bar you must high jump. Your opponent is yourself, your negative internal voices, your levels of determination."

The 2003 Cowgirls are examples and role models for athletes everywhere and proof of the powerful and resilient nature of women's sports. Hardin Simmons University's 2003 Cowgirls, congratulation on a great year.

HONORING AMERICAN SOLDIERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, Daniel Webster said, "God grants liberty only to those who love it and are always ready to guard and defend it."

What you see here is a banner that was displayed and then signed by thousands of my constituents 2 weeks ago at a "support the troops" rally in Rochester, Minnesota. Now, I know rallies like this have been conducted all over the United States, but this particular banner is on its way with me to Germany and will be displayed to the brave Americans who are in the hospitals at Ramstein Air Force Base, and then hopefully it will make it from there down to the gulf so that the soldiers who are serving there can see this banner and know that people in Southeastern Minnesota as well as people all over the United States support them.

No nation has given more in the defense of liberty than we Americans. From Valley Forge to Gettysburg, from Normandy to this very day, we have demonstrated what President Kennedy meant when he said that, "we will pay any price, we will bear any burden, we will meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, and

shoulder any burden to keep the lamp of liberty burning brightly throughout the world."

We have all been heartened by the stories coming out of Iraq. Many of us have read of the rescue of PFC Jessica Lynch as recounted by Central Command briefer Major General Gene Renuart. According to General Renuart, a Special Ops soldier called to Private Lynch as he entered the room saying, Jessica Lynch, we are United States soldiers. We are here to protect you and take you home.

As he walked over and took off his helmet, she looked up to him and said, I am an American soldier too.

But not as many of us have heard the story of the recovery of the remains of the soldiers believed to have been killed there. And I quote, "At the same time," Renuart recounted, "the team was led to a burial site where, in fact, they did find a number of bodies that they believed could be Americans missing in action. They did not have shovels in order to dig up those graves so they dug them up with their hands. And they wanted to do it very rapidly so they could race the sun and be off the site before the sun came up; a great testament to the will and desire of coalition forces to bring their own home."

They did dig them up with their hands and raced the sun.

On a cold and windy Sunday afternoon just 2 weeks ago, the people of Southern Minnesota gathered to send a simple message. We sang songs, heard speeches, read letters, and most of us got a little misty eyed as proud parents held pictures of their sons and daughters wearing the uniforms of each branch of our military. Our purpose was simple. We wanted to say thank you for their service; and, second, we wanted them to know that we stand with them wherever they may be serving. All took their places in that long line, that long gray line that has never failed us.

The images of the Iraqi citizens cheering our Armed Forces make us happy and proud, but somehow not surprised. Once the Commander in Chief gave the order to liberate Iraq, most of us knew that the result and those images were inevitable. On behalf of all who have attended rallies, and especially those who signed this banner, let me say first that we mourn with those families who have borne the heaviest price of this battle.

No politician can adequately salve wounds that will never completely heal. The best that we can say is that we will never forget. To all those, who, like PFC Lynch, are "American soldiers too," and to all our sailors, airmen and Marines, we say thank you. And we stand with you. May God continue to bless and protect our Nation and all who defend her.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING THE LIVES OF FREDA JONES AND OFFICER CLARK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, just a week ago last Saturday I visited with the family of a young woman who may not have been known in our community in Houston, Texas, maybe a few weeks ago. Just a young mother with two wonderful children, one a 3-month-old daughter and one a 10-year-old son, hard working, trying to provide for them. Her life became intimately intertwined with our departed and dear friend, Officer Clark.

For just about 10 days ago, Houston Police Officer Clark lost his life in a heroic attempt to save Freda Jones's life in a horrible and brutal robbery in our community.

Just this past week we buried Officer Clark, and I paid tribute to him, although I was not able to attend his going-home service because of business here in Washington. But through my office we shared with his wonderful family how much we appreciated his bravery and his service, how much we appreciated his love for his community, the fact that he was a consummate police officer.

Now, within 24 hours we will bury Freda Jones, who, listening to her family both Saturday and Sunday at a prayer vigil for her, I have come to understand her as a wonderful young woman, someone who simply wanted to provide for her family in working in the job she was working, innocently opening the office of a check cashing office by herself, taking up the responsibilities of another employee because that employee had been injured in a car accident. She was always a willing person, as we understand. She was a person who loved her family. She was, likewise, a person who brought the family together. She was certainly like your neighbor.

And so I would like to say to the Jones family, all of her brothers and sisters, her mother and father, her mother and father lost another child to brutality or brutal act of murder just a few years ago. And now they lost a cherished daughter to a brutal robbery, an unnecessary, callous act of murder.

And all of the perpetrators should be brought to justice because they took the life of a young woman who simply wanted to raise her children to make a decent living in this Nation.

So I think it is appropriate that as we honor so many heroes, we are so grateful for the young men and women who serve us in the United States military.

I had the opportunity to visit some of our injured soldiers at Bethesda Hos-

pital this morning. We are grateful for them. We pray for their families. We pray for the families of MIAs. We pray for the families of the POWs. We pray for the families of those who lost their lives. And every day in America there are heroes as well. Because Freda Jones lost her life by trying to fend off these robbers by calling the police. And I imagine in the act of calling the police, her life was taken. And then Officer Clark who responded, or was responding, had his life taken.

What a terrible testimony to the freedom of America. But we will keep pressing forward honoring heroes, local heroes like Freda Jones and Officer Clark. And to the Houston community, I offer my deepest sympathy to the family that will mourn tomorrow as she will be laid to rest. I say to you that you have at least had a wonderful time in her life and as well the wonderful memories; and, yes, you have her two beautiful children and this wonderful extended family.

I hope that you, the Jones family and the Clark family, will find strength in each other. You are forever bonded together. And I hope you will know that the Houston community, the 18th Congressional District appreciates so much that you lived, but also that your life tragically was sacrificed but it will not ever be forgotten. We will remember, and we will work together to fight against the brutal and criminal acts that sick minds think they can perpetrate on our communities without paying the price.

We hope justice will be rendered. But most of all, Freda Jones, we hope that you will have a peaceful going-home service, recognizing that the community loved you and will continue to show its love to your family and to your children.

□ 1430

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURGESS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FRANKS of Arizona addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MURDER OF CUBAN FREEDOM SEEKERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today once again to talk about one of the last hostile regimes on the planet, an island 90 miles to the south of my home State of Florida, Cuba.

For well over 40-plus years, Fidel Castro has time and time again shown his reprehensible disregard for the safety and welfare of his own people. His tyrannical regime has forced countless innocent people to risk their lives to

seek the shores of the United States. What is worse, these people go to the furthest of extremes, even placing other countrymen at risk in order to seek freedom.

On April 2, in another one of the countless stories of Cubans trying to seek refuge, a group of three men attempted to take over a ferry ship and force it to go to the United States. Though I am in no way supportive of hijacking or putting others at risk, it is clear from our history with this oppressive Nation that its people will do almost anything for just a taste of freedom.

The men were prosecuted on Tuesday, those three men, in summary trials for very grave acts of terrorism and given only a few days to appeal their sentences. This pathetic excuse for a judicial system never gave these men a chance. I must report to this body that, earlier today, these three men were executed.

Mr. Speaker, these actions were not that of terrorists but those of people seeking freedom. It is clear that these men never intended to harm anyone. All they wanted was a chance at what millions of Cubans have been thirsting for since Fidel Castro took control and took power, and that is freedom, a right we in this country enjoy and a right we are fighting for today in Iraq. Though these acts should have been punished, the penalty was extreme, barbarous, even by the most strict of standards.

I have fought on this floor against terrorism all my life, and I will not accept it in any form, but this execution today was clearly a message to the Cuban people that freedom is not an option.

To those colleagues of mine who have suggested over the past year-and-a-half that we open trade and opportunity with Fidel Castro, they need to look at this material and see that this man executed three people today. Would these same Members offer a peaceful resolution to Saddam Hussein who I consider equally heinous as Fidel Castro? Would they suggest going to do trade with Saddam? Let us look at what Fidel Castro is all about, and let us recognize what danger he puts his own people in.

We must continue what we do by upholding the sanctions and further limiting U.S. government involvement with this rogue Nation. The people of Cuba deserve a democracy. Their leader is a tyrant, a dictator and now, based on this evidence, a murderer. Many of us have known that. My colleagues, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), have all been telling this body about the horrors of the oppression, of the silencing of people merely trying to get a democracy in place in that Nation.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone must be put in front of a firing squad it is Mr. Castro himself for these despicable acts.