

REMEMBERING MCPHELAN REESE

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 20, 2003

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to pay tribute to a talented and endearing man who contributed so much to the community of Bonham, Texas, and to the Sam Rayburn Library in Bonham for the past quarter of a century—McPhelan Reese, who passed away this past summer at the age of 97.

Mac Reese was a fixture in Bonham as the writer-in-residence at the Sam Rayburn Library from 1975 until his retirement in 2001. He was the oldest full-time employee in The University of Texas System. Mac wrote the introduction to each chapter of Sam Rayburn's autobiography, Speak, Mister Speaker, and wrote the preface to the Library's collection of political cartoons, Impressions of Mister Sam. He was the author of two books of poetry, Showdown and other Poems and Gullible's Travails and was working on this third volume, All About Us, a tribute to his beloved Bonham, when failing health forced him to stop.

Born in Bonham, Mac was raised by his mother, Victoria Phelan Reese, an actress and teacher who instilled in him a love of the arts, and his grandfather, Leonidas Reese. Mac pursued singing at the Kidd-Key Conservatory in Sherman and then at the Fine Arts Academy in Cincinnati. While in Cincinnati he also trained to be a boxer at Speedy Bishop's Gym, where many of the Midwest's fighters worked out. Mac simultaneously pursued singing and boxing careers before facial injuries brought both efforts to an end. He then spent some time in Hollywood, where he played small roles in the movies and worked as a writer.

Eventually Mac moved back to Texas—to Houston, where he worked as a master painter. In the 1970s he moved to Bonham, his hometown, following the death of his first wife, Pan Carr Reese, and his marriage to Ila Rogers Carr. In 1975 he began working at the Sam Rayburn Library as a writer-in-residence and the unofficial poet laureate of Fannin County. He delighted in telling stories and was considered by many to be Bonham's greatest storyteller. Even after retirement, he continued to come to the Library and entertain children and visitors with his many delightful stories.

Mac was a beloved and much appreciated fixture in the community and at the Sam Rayburn Library. Generations of schoolchildren and visitors to the Library will remember him with fondness, and through him they will remember and appreciate so many stories associated with Bonham. On behalf of his many friends and fans, I want to take this opportunity in the House of Representatives to pay our last respects to this beloved and colorful Texan—McPhelan Reese.

ANNUAL SIKH CONVENTION LAYS PLANS FOR EXPANDING FREEDOM STRUGGLE

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 20, 2003

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, the International Sikh Organization held its annual convention

on the weekend of October 10–11–12, 2003, in Houston. The convention laid plans for the expansion of the movement to free Khalistan, the Sikh homeland that declared its independence on October 7, 1987.

The convention was attended by many delegates from all around the United States and Canada. They made plans to expand their office in Washington, which has been an invaluable resource to us here in Congress in getting out information about the oppression of the Sikhs and other minorities by the Indian government. This is good to see. The glow of freedom still burns brightly in the hearts of these Sikh leaders.

The delegates also congratulated Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the International Sikh Organization and the Council of Khalistan, for his tireless work in support of the interests of Sikhs in this country and the cause of freedom for Khalistan. I can say from my personal experience that Dr. Aulakh has worked for that cause with great dedication for several years and he has provided a lot of information to those of us in Congress who are interested in the cause of human rights and freedom in South Asia.

Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to take this opportunity to salute the International Sikh Organization on a very successful convention and wish it continued success in the future. We can support its efforts to bring freedom to the Sikh people, as well as the other captive nations of South Asia such as Nagaland, Kashmir, and others, by stopping American aid and trade with India until human rights are observed and by declaring our support for a fair plebiscite under international monitoring on the question of independence.

I would like to place the ISO's press release on its very successful convention into the RECORD at this time.

ANNUAL CONVENTION ON KHALISTAN VERY SUCCESSFUL—PLANS TO STRENGTHEN OFFICE FORMULATED

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 14, 2003—The annual convention of the International Sikh Organization on Khalistan was very successful. Delegates from all around the United States and Canada attended. The convention was held October 10–11–12 in Houston, Texas.

The convention recognized Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the International Sikh Organization and the Council of Khalistan, for his dedication, vision, persistence, and commitment to the cause of liberating Khalistan, the independent Sikh homeland declared on October 7, 1987. Since then, it has been under Indian occupation. When India became independent, Sikhs were equal partners in the transfer of power and were to receive their own state, but the weak and ignorant Sikh leaders of the time were tricked into staying with India on the promise that they would have "the glow of freedom" and no law affecting the Sikhs would pass without their consent. Sikhs ruled an independent and sovereign Punjab from 1710 to 1716 and again from 1765 to 1849. No Sikh representative has ever signed the Indian constitution. The Council of Khalistan is the government pro tempore of Khalistan.

At the convention Dr. Bakshish Singh Sandhu of Pennsylvania and Sardar Harjinder Singh of New Jersey offered to spearhead the acquisition of a building in Washington, D.C. to house the International Sikh Organization's offices.

The delegates emphasized the need for an office in Washington to protect the interests of Sikhs in this country, as well as to work for freedom for Khalistan. An example of

this need is the video recently removed from the State Department website entitled "Terrorism: A War Without Borders" which portrayed all Sikhs as terrorists. Because of the letter by U.S. Representatives Dan Burton (R-Ind.), Edolphus Towns (D-NY), and Wally Herger (R-Cal.), the State Department recently removed this video and its text from its website. The convention passed a resolution of appreciation of these Congressmen.

Other resolutions included one asking every Gurdwara to contribute \$500 per month to the Washington office, one urging Sikhs not to support the various branches of the Akali Dal, which is under Indian government control, one calling for young Sikhs to step forward into leadership roles, and one demanding freedom for Khalistan.

History shows that multinational states such as India are doomed to failure. Countries like Austria-Hungary, India's longtime friend the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and others prove this point. India is not one country; it is a polyglot like those countries, thrown together for the convenience of the British colonialists. It is doomed to break up as they did. India is ruled by Hindu theocrats whose agenda is "Hindu, Hindi, Hindutva, Hindu Rashtra," or total Hindu domination of every facet of Indian life. An Indian Cabinet minister said that everyone who lives in India must be a Hindu or subservient to Hindus.

"We thank everyone who attended this important convention," Dr. Aulakh said. "Their commitment, their ideas and their support are helpful as we move forward in our work to protect the interests of Sikhs in this country and to continue working for the liberation of Khalistan," he said. "We sincerely thank and appreciate the hospitality of the Management Committee of the Houston Gurdwara. Special thanks are due to the Council advisors of the Houston area."

The Indian government has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, more than 200,000 Christians since 1948, over 85,000 Muslims in Kashmir since 1988, and tens of thousands of Tamils, Assamese, Manipuris, Dalits, and others. The Indian Supreme Court called the Indian government's murders of Sikhs "worse than a genocide."

Indian police arrested human-rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalsa after he exposed their policy of mass cremation of Sikhs, in which over 50,000 Sikhs have been arrested, tortured, and murdered, then their bodies were declared unidentified and secretly cremated. He was murdered in police custody. His body was not given to his family. The police never released the body of former Jathedar of the Akal Takht Gurdev Singh Kaunke after SSP Swaran Singh Ghotna murdered him. Ghotna has never been brought to trial for the Jathedar Kaunke murder. No one has been brought to justice for the kidnapping and murder of Jaswant Singh Khalsa. According to a report by the Movement Against State Repression (MASR), 52,268 Sikhs are being held as political prisoners in India without charge or trial. Some have been in illegal custody since 1984!

THE HOSPITALIZED VETERANS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2003

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 20, 2003

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to correct an inequity facing America's