

Cuban immigrant and the founder of the Puerco Rico Iron Works, described to his young son how, in 1898, the people of Ponce had welcomed U.S. troops landing on the island.

The arrival of American forces did not, however, bring the immediate advantages that some had predicted. Instead, the process of political, economic, and cultural growth in Puerto Rico which began in 1898 has lasted all of Luis Ferré's life.

In 1917, when Ferré was 13 years old, the Puerto Rican people were granted U.S. citizenship. "Of course I can't remember it distinctly," he said 75 years later, "but ever since, I've been very proud of that day. I feel it is a great privilege and a great honor to be a citizen of the greatest republic that we've had in the history of the world."

Ferré's respect for the United States dates back to his years as a university student in Cambridge, Massachusetts. That period away from home was formative, both professionally and politically. He recalled much later: "I was a part of the old Hispanic community, but then I went to the mainland to study, in Boston at M.I.T., and I became completely sold on the importance of having Puerto Rico become a State of the Union, on an equal basis with the rest of the States."

Ferré returned to Puerto Rico with a degree in engineering and a firm belief in Statehood. He built his father's business into a hugely successful industrial enterprise, becoming a millionaire in the process. As his fortune grew, so did the movement among Puerto Ricans to govern themselves.

Luis Ferré entered politics at a propitious time in the island's history. In 1948, Puerto Ricans elected a governor for the first time, choosing Luis Muñoz Marín. In 1952 the year before commonwealth status and internal self-government, Luis Ferré was elected to the Puerto Rican House of Representatives. From this position, he advocated commonwealth as a stepping stone to his ultimate goal of Statehood for Puerto Rico.

Ferré saw the chance to further the cause in 1967, the year of the first political status plebiscite on the island. While commonwealth was the winning option, Ferré utilized the plebiscite to mobilize Statehood forces and establish a new political entity, the New Progressive Party (NPP).

Ferré ran for Governor of Puerto Rico as the NPP candidate in 1968, and he won a close race. His victory marked the end of 25 years of political dominance by Muñoz Marín's Popular Democratic Party (PDP), and the beginning of a new era in which the NPP and PDP would vie for the support of the Puerto Rican people.

Ferré was Governor for one term, from 1969 to 1973. However, his importance stems not so much from what he achieved in those four years, as from the precedent that he set.

After him came more Statehooders like Carlos Romero Barcelo, Hernán Padilla, and Pedro Rosselló. First under Ferré's guidance, then under his inspiration, the New Progressive Party with its statehood agenda has become a legitimate and powerful political force. As he noted in 1997, "When I became Governor of Puerto Rico, as a Statehood governor, we had 400,000 votes. Today, we won the election in 1996 with 1,600,000 votes."

Along with his political astuteness and business savvy, Ferré was also a great lover and supporter of the arts. "Art is something that

enriches all nations," Ferré said in 1997. "It is very important to teach [art to] children when they're young because it opens up their minds and imagination and keeps them alive. In accordance with this philosophy, he founded the Museo de Arte de Ponce in 1965. The museum features artwork from medieval times to the present, focusing on the relevance of the European in Puerto Rico. Housed in an impressive, modern building, it is a major cultural attraction in Ferré's home city.

Over the past century, Puerto Rico has grown in freedom, wealth, and influence. Similarly, Luis Ferré has attained the honored positions of elder statesman and philanthropist. He is one of four Puerto Ricans to have received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. (Muñoz Marín, Antonia Pantoja, and Gov. Ferré's sister, Isolina, are the other three.) Reflecting on this distinction, he said, "I honestly believe that this was a recognition by the people of the United States to the people of Puerto Rico. After all, the people of Puerto Rico for the last eighty years [since attaining citizenship] have been contributing, in many ways, to the enrichment and the growth of our country."

TRIBUTE TO LESTER L.  
GOLDSTEIN

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay homage to one of Miami-Dade County's leaders, the late Lester L. Goldstein, who passed away on March 16, 2004. His passing has cast a veil of deep sadness over our community, and I would like to extend my condolences to his widow, Bella, his children, Jeff and Tina, and his grandchildren, Jason and Ian.

Lester Goldstein was a partner in the Bilzen, Sumburg, Baena Price & Alexrod law firm in Miami, but he was so much more. He was an extraordinary man of service, a quiet but tireless and effective leader who felt at ease with people throughout our diverse community, and he devoted his life to improving their lives by his service and his example.

He served as the chairperson of the Greater Miami Service corps, the founder of the Alzheimer Care Committee of Douglas Gardens, a founder of the Miami Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged, and a founder of the Mt. Sinai Medical Center. These are but a few of the great initiatives his humanitarian spirit willed to come to fruition, and these programs now serve to improve the lives and lessen the burdens of countless residents of our community.

He spearheaded civic fund-raising efforts to help the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the Zoological Society of Florida, and he was a member of the American Arbitration Association, the Builders Association of South Florida, and local infrastructure and water management advisory groups.

As a highly competent professional in real estate development, zoning and land use, administrative law and environmental compliance, he conscientiously advocated protection of our environment. His counsel was sought in matters ranging from developments of regional impact to the rezoning of local projects, includ-

ing coordination of efforts among community groups, government agencies, scientists and environmental regulators. Our community feels the loss of a truly decent and caring man who made it his personal business to advocate for the well-being of our community.

The numerous tributes and accolades with which government officials and various organizations have honored him during his lifetime are testimony to the utmost gratitude and respect he enjoyed from a grateful community. He truly personified the resilience and compassion of a people servant whose life exemplified what Martin Luther King, Jr. said that ". . . everybody can be great because everybody can serve."

This is the legacy Mr. Lester L. Goldstein bequeathed to us. I am privileged to have been his friend, for his genuine advocacy on behalf of the less fortunate evoked a caring heart and a compassionate humanity.

HONORING FRANCES LYLE

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Frances Lyle. Mrs. Lyle, who recently celebrated her 82nd birthday, was nominated by her fellow employees at the Henry County Library in Clinton, Missouri, for the Missouri Older Worker Award. She subsequently received the regional State award.

As an employee of the Henry County Library for the past 5 years, Mrs. Lyle has proven to be an asset and a joy to work with. She has shown her ability to relate to patrons of all ages. In an effort to serve the senior citizens in the community, she writes book reviews for the local paper, focusing on older books in the library's collection. She serves as an invaluable resource for older patrons who have read all of the books by their favorite authors. She has also become a favorite of many of the younger patrons, telling stories to the teenagers who pass through the doors.

Mrs. Lyle has taken it upon herself to organize and manage the annual library book sale. This is a major fund-raising event for the library, with all proceeds going to children's programming. Mrs. Lyle's efforts have been successful enough to bring in a nationally recognized author or storyteller to visit with the local children each of the past 3 years.

In addition to her work in the library, Mrs. Lyle is also an active member of her church. She is very involved in missionary projects, collecting books and supplies for children overseas. She also collects books for the church's annual gift drive, a project that ensures needy children in the area a special Christmas. In addition, she lends her beautiful singing voice to the church choir.

Mr. Speaker, Frances Lyle's friends and colleagues believe she is worthy of recognition, and I agree. She serves as an example, not just of the value that older Americans have to our communities but for all of us who could do so much more for our neighbors and those in need. I am sure the other Members of the House will join me in thanking her for all that she does.