

At this moment, I know we all wish for one thing, to have a few minutes again with Bob, to be with him before the fire on Freeman Parkway or watching the sun set in Middletown, to feel the comfort of his presence, to know that in a life that can mean there was at least one who was noble. But, that cannot be.

And knowing this, our hearts would surely break save for one thing. Bob made us stronger and better by his life. He has given us the example and the ability to carry on. And, we will.

Dear friend, I shall miss you.

Dear friend, "you have been a credit to the Regiment."

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF DANIELLE MILLER

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I pay tribute and congratulate Danielle Miller of Louisville, KY on being named a distinguished finalist for the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. This award honors young people in middle level and high school grades for outstanding volunteer service to their communities.

Danielle Miller founded a service organization called the "National Awareness Committee" to provide clothing, books, and other needed items to members of the Lakshota Sioux Nation living on a reservation in South Dakota. Danielle became aware of the Lakshotas needs during a school presentation by the Native American Support Effort—NASD—in the eighth grade, and became a volunteer. Although she was too young to go on a mission to the reservation, she realized she could accomplish a great deal in her community.

Danielle Miller planned and organized five collection drives at local schools and in nearby communities, and gathered enough clothing, blankets, kitchenware, bicycles and books to fill a 52-foot truck. She recruited volunteers to help sort, pack, and load the donations, and personally accompanied the shipment to the Rosebud Reservation in southern South Dakota. Danielle plans to make a documentary film that will be used to make even more people aware of the Lakshota situation.

The citizens of Louisville are fortunate to have a young lady like Danielle Miller in their community. Her example of dedication, hard work and compassion should be an inspiration to all throughout the entire Commonwealth.

She has my most sincere appreciation for this work and I look forward to her continued service to Kentucky. •

MG EDWARD MECHEMBIER

• Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, today I wish to share with my colleagues a story about a wonderful American who I have had the privilege of personally knowing for many years. I am talking about MG Ed Mechenbier. I have had

the honor of knowing him as a friend and as a true patriot of the American spirit and soul. On June 30, 2004, MG Ed Mechenbier will celebrate his retirement from the United States Air Force Reserve following a brilliant military career that began in 1964 when then Cadet Mechenbier entered the United States Air Force Academy.

My friend Ed Mechenbier is a very humble man, not known for patting himself on the back or openly touting his many accomplishments. But, he is a hero in many respects. He is a man who is driven by a sense of duty, a sense of honor, and a sense of country.

In June 1967, Ed Mechenbier found himself flying an F4C Phantom II fighter while assigned to the 390th Fighter Squadron, Da Nang Air Base, South Vietnam. On June 14, 1967, Ed was assigned a strike mission against the Vu Chu railroad near Kep, approximately 30 miles northeast of Hanoi. This flight was the 80th mission for then 1LT Ed Mechenbier. June 14, 1967, also marks the day that Ed became a Prisoner of War after his aircraft suffered a direct hit from a surface to air missile. Little did he know that when he began his 80th mission that he would not leave the Hoa Lo prison, which is also known as the "Hanoi Hilton" for the next five years, eight months and four days.

The stories that our former POWs describe remind us of the tremendous fighting spirit and sense of survival that distinguish and define the modern day American warrior. February 12, 1973, became a day of freedom for Ed and many other POWs who were released to return with honor to the hallowed soil of the United States. Upon return home, Captain Mechenbier was awarded the Silver Star with the Oak Leaf Cluster for his resistance to demands by the North Vietnamese for information, confessions, and propaganda material. In addition, Captain Mechenbier was awarded the Bronze Star with distinction for his efforts to conduct himself strictly in accordance with the Code of Conduct during his capture and imprisonment. The POW credo "Return with Honor" is exactly what Ed Mechenbier did. Throughout his imprisonment, he did not lose his fighting spirit. He did not lose his sense of hope. And, he did not fail to remain anything, but a shining example of a warrior whose duty assignment had been temporarily changed.

The irony of this story continues and on that day in February 1973, an Air Force C-141 Starliner had been dispatched to the Gia Lam Airport in Hanoi, North Vietnam. To the casual observer, the tail number of that aircraft, 66-0177 is insignificant. Historically, however, that identification number is very important because it was the first U.S. aircraft to leave North Vietnam with former POWs as passengers. On board that aircraft, which was affectionately dubbed the "Hanoi Taxi," was former POW Captain Mechenbier. Throughout the proc-

ess of returning former POWs to the United States, the "Hanoi Taxi" was a vital resource as were many other aircraft that were needed to accomplish such an honorable mission. In the years following February 1973, the Hanoi Taxi's history and legacy had been temporarily forgotten while the aircraft carried out a long and proud period of service within the Air Force fleet. Today, over 30 years later, the Hanoi Taxi is still flying airlift missions for the 445th Airlift Wing at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, OH.

At the same time, the life of Ed Mechenbier has also moved forward. Following several assignments that include flying with the 4950th Test Wing and the 162nd Tactical Fighter Squadron, the young Air Force Academy cadet of 1964 is now leaving military service as a major general in the United States Air Force Reserve. Through the many promotions and the many assignments, Ed never forgot who he was and his keen sense of perspective tends to bring calmness in times of difficulty.

Several years ago, as a member of the 445th Airlift Wing, Ed reunited with the Hanoi Taxi in his capacity as a member of the United States Air Force Reserve. The historic aircraft and the former POW, who was once a passenger on the aircraft, became one of its pilots. Recently, Ed Mechenbier made his final flight as a command pilot having accumulated more than 3,500 hours flight time in several military aircraft. The final flight was more than just a trip around the traffic pattern—the final mission was one that would take him half way around the world to land at the Noi Bai airport in Hanoi. The mission was to return to American soil the remains of American service members who had been missing in action during the Vietnam era and recently recovered from central Vietnam by U.S. military officials. On this mission, the Hanoi Taxi once again returned to Vietnam and the former passenger, Ed Mechenbier was at the controls of the aircraft. Once again, the Hanoi Taxi returned to freedom the remains of fallen comrades from a war that has not been forgotten.

During a repatriation ceremony that was conducted prior to departure for return to the United States, Ed Mechenbier said this to those who gathered to honor the fallen comrades: "For those of us who were fortunate enough to come home, I think we owe a little bit to all the families—to help them make the closure on that end." The last operational mission was carried out in the same manner that Ed Mechenbier has conducted himself since 1964—with honor, with pride, and with a tremendous sense of duty.

On June 30, 2004, MG Ed Mechenbier and several hundred of his friends will gather to celebrate his retirement. Even though retirement signifies an ending of sorts, his legacy of excellence, commitment, patriotism, and