

determination of many countries to resist the aggression of Nazi Germany. This is a story of the sacrifices made by a battered but brave group of individuals thrown together in a combined effort to halt the domination of a smaller, weaker nation by a larger, more powerful aggressor.

Amidst the cataclysm that engulfed the countries of Europe at the time, it seems now preposterous that a small island dared to stand up to the aggressor to preserve its freedom and defend its honor. Today, more than half a century later, the heroic events that took place in the Battle of Crete remain etched in the memory of people around the world. In commemoration of this anniversary, and for the benefit of future generations, I will share a brief account of these events as they unfolded.

In early April 1941, the German army rushed to the aid of their defeated ally, Italy, and invaded Greece. Following a valiant struggle, Greek forces had been pushed entirely off the continent and were forced to take refuge on the island of Crete.

The German army then looked covetously across the sea to Crete because of the British airfields on the island, which could be used by the Allies for air strikes against the oil fields of Rumania, thereby denying this vital war commodity to Hitler's forces now preparing for their attack on Russia. If captured, it would also provide air and sea bases from which the Nazis could dominate the eastern Mediterranean and launch air attacks against Allied forces in northern Africa. In fact, the Nazi high command envisioned the capture of Crete to be the first of a series of assaults leading to the Suez Canal. Hitler intended a short, one month, campaign, starting in March. On successful completion, his troops would be re-assigned to Russia.

Crete's defenses at the time had been badly neglected due to the deployment of Allied forces in North Africa. General Bernard Freyberg of the New Zealand Division was appointed by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as commander of a small contingent of Allied troops which had been dispatched to the island a few months before and re-enforced by additional troops who had retreated from the Greek mainland.

Early on the morning of May 20, 1941, Crete became the theater of the first and largest German airborne operation of the war. The skies above Crete were filled with more than eight thousand Nazi paratroopers, landing in a massive invasion of the island, which was subjected to heavy bombing and attacks in what became known as "Operation Mercury."

Waves of bombers pounded the Allied positions followed by a full-scale airborne assault. Elite paratroopers and glider-borne infantry units fell upon the rag-tag Allied soldiers and were met with ferocious resistance from the Allied troops and the Cretan population.

Although General Freyberg had decided not to arm the Cretans because they were believed to be apti-royalist, they fought bravely with whatever was at hand during the invasion. As soon as the battle broke out, the people of Crete volunteered to serve in the militia. Centuries of oppression and several revolts against Venetians and Turks had taught them that freedom is won and preserved by sacrifice, and there was hardly a family without a gun stashed somewhere in the house. For the first time, the Germans met stiff partisan resistance.

War-seasoned men joined the regular troops in the effort to repel the invader. Old men, women and children participated and used whatever makeshift weapons they could find. They pointed their antiquated guns at the descending German paratroopers. They used sticks, sickles and even their bare hands, to fight those soldiers already on the ground. Most of them were illiterate villagers but their intuition, honed by the mortal risk they were facing, led them to fight with courage and bravery. "Aim for the legs and you'll get them in the heart," was the popular motto that summarized their hastily acquired battle experience.

Seven days later, the defenders of Crete—though clinging to their rocky defensive positions—knew that they would soon be overrun. The evacuation order was given, and nearly 18,000 men were rescued. These valiant survivors had bought the Allies a week's precious time free of Nazi air and sea attacks based from Crete. More importantly, they inflicted severe losses on the German airborne forces, the showpieces of the Nazi army. Although well-armed and thoroughly equipped, the Germans didn't break the Cretan's love of freedom.

Although the Germans captured the island in ten days, they paid a heavy price. Of the 8,100 paratroopers involved in this operation, close to 4,000 were killed and 1,600 were wounded. So injured were the German units that they never again attempted an airborne assault of the magnitude launched at Crete. Hitler may have won the Battle of Crete, but he lost the war. The German victory proved a hollow one, as Crete became the graveyard of the German parachute troops. In fact, it is a lesson taught in almost every major military academy in the world on what not to do.

In retaliation for the losses they incurred, the Nazis spread punishment, terror and death on the innocent civilians of the island. More than two thousand Cretans were executed during the first month alone and thousands more later. Despite these atrocities, for the four years following the Allied withdrawal from the island, the people of Crete put up a courageous guerilla resistance, aided by a few British and Allied officers and troops who remained. Those involved were known as the Andartes (the Rebels).

Cretan people of all ages joined or aided the Andartes. Children would pile rocks in the roads to slow down the German convoys. They even carried messages in their schoolbooks because it was the only place that the German soldiers never looked. These messages contained information critical to the Andartes who were hiding in the mountains and would come down for midnight raids or daytime sabotages.

The German terror campaign was meant to break the fighting spirit and morale of the Andartes. Besides the random and frequent executions, German soldiers used other means to achieve their goal. They leveled many buildings in the towns and villages, destroyed religious icons, and locked hundreds of Cretans in churches for days without food or water, but nothing worked. These actions only made the Cretans more ferocious in their quest for freedom.

Even in the face of certain death while standing in line to be executed, Cretans did not beg for their lives. This shocked the German troops. Kurt Student, the German Para-

trooper Commander who planned the invasion, said of the Cretans, "I have never seen such a defiance of death."

Finally, the Cretan people participated in one of the most daring operations that brought shame and humiliation to the German occupation forces and exhilaration and hope to the enslaved peoples of Europe. Major-General Von Kreipe, Commander of all German forces in Crete, was abducted from his own headquarters in April 1944 and transferred to a POW camp in England.

The German troops had never encountered such resistance. Hitler had initially sent 12,000 troops to Crete, thinking that the occupation would be swift. By the end of the three-and-a-half years of occupation, Hitler had sent a total of 100,000 troops, to confront a little more than 5,000 Cretan Andarte fighters. These German troops could have been deployed somewhere else. More German troops were lost during the occupation of Crete than in France, Yugoslavia and Poland combined.

Most importantly, as a result of the battle in Crete, Hitler's master plan to invade Russia before the coming of winter, had to be postponed, which resulted in the deaths of many German troops who were not properly prepared to survive the harsh Russian winter.

As we Americans know from our history, freedom does not come without a price. For their gallant resistance against the German invasion and occupation of their island, Cretans paid a stiff price. Within the first five months of the Battle of Crete, 3,500 Cretans were executed and many more were killed in the ensuing three-and-a-half years of occupation.

Mr. Speaker, there are historical reasons why we Americans appreciate the sacrifices of the Cretan people in defending their island during the Battle of Crete. We have a history replete with similar heroic events starting with our popular revolt that led to the birth of our nation more than two centuries.

We must always remember that as long as there are people willing to sacrifice their lives for the just cause of defending the integrity and freedom of their country, there is always hope for a better tomorrow. May we take inspiration from the shining example of the people of Crete in ensuring that this is indeed the case.

A TRIBUTE TO TSCL CHAIRMAN  
GEORGE A. SMITH

HON. WALTER B. JONES

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to George Smith. Since 2001 the TREA Senior Citizens League (TSCL) has been under the strong leadership of Board of Trustees Chairman George A. Smith. With George Smith at the helm, TSCL has gained greater credibility and respectability in the Congress and in the country as a whole. TSCL has become a significant national player on Social Security issues such as the Notch, Cost of Living Adjustment based on a Consumer Price Index for the Elderly, Mexico Totalization, and a Lock Box of Trust Funds, and on other issues such as drug importation. This has largely occurred because Chairman Smith insisted that TSCL emphasize

educating the public about senior issues. Like other TSCL Board of Trustees members he has served without pay.

George A. Smith was born on October 28, 1930. He currently resides in San Antonio, Texas, with his wife Marie. Mr. Smith entered the U.S. Army in July 1948 and served an illustrious 21-year career. While on active military duty, Mr. Smith earned the Bronze Star, the Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster and a multitude of miscellaneous awards and commendations.

Mr. Smith is a TREA (The Retired Enlisted Association) Past National President. As a TREA leader, he initiated and finalized the purchase of the first TREA National Headquarters. He has served as Chairman of the Past President's Advisory Council, Chairman of the TREA Memorial Foundation, Chairman of TREA Finance Committee, Chairman of TREA 5-Year Planning Committee, President of TREA Chapter 3, and Chairman of TREA Convention Committee.

George Smith has an Associate Degree in Business Management from Metro State College in Denver, Colorado, and is retired from the Colorado Department of Employment where he served as the Job Service Director. He also worked in the area of direct sales for Telecommunications, and was an owner of his own precision welding business. He served as President of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3482, and as President of a local homeowners association.

George Smith learned from his experiences in the military and private sector that a strong foundation has to be constructed brick by brick using motivational management and a team concept. At TSCL Chairman Smith used his management expertise to revitalize the organization. He developed an expanded legislative agenda of activities in Congress.

His visionary leadership helped move TSCL forward to the status of a well-known and respected organization by most Members of Congress. During his tenure as Chairman, TSCL has become a significant national player on several senior issues.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I am especially grateful for George Smith's service in the military. His advocacy for senior issues and for retired enlisted military will be missed when he steps down as TSCL Chairman later this year. Thank you George for your remarkable contributions and distinguished sacrifices for our country. You did make a difference. God bless you.

#### HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

### HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 19, 2005*

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, on May 17, 2005, during a Committee on Education and the Workforce hearing on High School Reform I gave the following statement:

I am pleased we will today hear from the Governors of Massachusetts and Iowa on what measures they have found useful in reforming high schools in their own states. I am especially pleased that Governor Vilsack has highlighted the importance of vocational education and its role in high schools. High school reform is an important piece of the puzzle ensuring that our nation's young

adults are able to succeed in their chosen career path. The goal of high schools should be to prepare students for the next step in their lives, whether that be continuing on to college or beginning a vocational training program.

First, we must work to ensure that students graduate from high school. Recent statistics reported by the Harvard Civil Rights Project show that only 68 percent of students who entered the 9th grade graduated in the 12th grade. Minority students were even less likely to graduate. In today's economy, a high school diploma has increasingly become a minimum requirement for workers. We must address issues that keep students from graduating and get diplomas in their hands.

Students, regardless of background, should also know the options they have after graduation. The knowledge of training programs, entry requirements for universities, and financial aid options is invaluable for both students and their parents. Course work must effectively engage and challenge students, continuing their academic growth and building upon their foundation of skills. Students of all levels should make progress in their studies.

Our nation is diverse and so are the students in our high schools. There is no "one size fits all" for high schools or the students in them. Reforms for high schools should both recognize and employ that fact and aim to ensure that all students graduate from high school and are prepared for the next step in lives.

#### CENTRAL NEW JERSEY RECOGNIZES AND CELEBRATES THE CAREER OF GRETA KIERNAN OF PLAINSBORO, NEW JERSEY

### HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 19, 2005*

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the career of Greta Kiernan, who has served the State of New Jersey in a multitude of capacities for more than 40 years.

Having known Greta for a number of years, I can personally attest to the tremendous contributions she has made during her career as a public servant. From her introduction to politics as a member of the Bergen County Democratic Committee in 1963, Ms. Kiernan has distinguished herself by virtue of her exemplary leadership and commitment. She has served as a key aide to several members of the New Jersey State Senate and Assembly, a legislative liaison to New Jersey for the New York / New Jersey Port Authority, a principal staff member for the Low Level Radioactive Waste Siting Board and a principal staff member in the office of the Congressional Representative of the 12th District. Ms. Kiernan continues to build a political legacy. She was the first Democratic woman to serve in the New Jersey State Assembly from Bergen County. Elected in 1978, Ms. Kiernan represented what was then New Jersey's 39th District.

A woman of political acuity, skill, and expertise, Greta Kiernan is also known for her loyalty and kindness. A mother of four and grandmother of eleven, Ms. Kiernan is an avid collector of political memorabilia and artifacts. Her collection includes a rare copy of the minutes of the 1947 New Jersey Constitutional Convention, an extensive treasury of books on

the political history of New Jersey (signed by their authors), and countless buttons, bumper stickers, and hats. Her wit and quiet charm are boundless, and she has earned the trust and admiration of so many.

Greta Kiernan roles have ranged the gamut of public service, but her values and dedication have remained constant throughout. An inspiration to citizens of the State of New Jersey, Greta Kiernan has contributed significantly to the life of her community. She has earned our heartfelt appreciation and respect for her efforts. I ask my colleagues to join me in giving her this recognition.

#### TRIBUTE TO KATIE BROWNE

### HON. THOMAS M. REYNOLDS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 19, 2005*

Mr. REYNOLDS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to pay tribute to 11-year-old Katie Brownell, of Genesee County, New York, for pitching a perfect Little League game on May 14th. This is a terrific accomplishment and Katie has much to be proud of, as do her family and her community.

Katie, the only female player in the league, displayed tremendous ability as she pitched the perfect game, striking out every single batter she faced, allowing not even a single baserunner.

This is not the first time Katie has dominated a baseball game however. In her first appearance on the mound this season, Katie allowed only one hit, striking out 14 batters through five innings. Katie also has a batting average of .714 through the first three games of the season.

Furthermore, Katie has shown tremendous sportsmanship, taking this accomplishment humbly and in stride. Katie has never gloated and has never bragged. She simply loves the game and enjoys playing it—characteristics equally as impressive as her abilities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this Congress join me in honoring Katie Brownell, and recognize her tremendous athletic abilities and sportsmanship after pitching a perfect game for her Little League team.

#### TRIBUTE TO JOHN GARRETT, JR.— A TRUE AMERICAN PATRIOT

### HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 19, 2005*

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of my uncle, John Garrett, Jr. and I ask my colleagues here in the U.S. House of Representatives to join me in paying tribute to this outstanding American patriot.

John Garrett, Jr. was a Staff Sergeant and platoon leader of the 229th Port Company attached to the 1st Engineer Specialist Brigade of the 1st Army and on June 6th, 1944, his contingent of 75 men was responsible for transporting ammunition to the landing Allied Forces.

He was extremely proud of his service in the Army during WWII; however, he was disheartened that the role of African American soldiers who helped lead our country to victory