

meat cutter to welder to United States Senator.

But—it's important to note—Senator BYRD has never hidden the secret of his success. If you talk to him, he will give credit to whom credit is due.

He said it right here on the Senate floor in May of 2000 days before his 63rd anniversary. He said: "I have to frankly say that what little I have amounted, if it is anything much, I owe for the most part to [Erma]."

Well Erma, the people of West Virginia and the United States owe you a debt of gratitude for all you've done for your husband and for giving us his time for so many years.

I've said before, Senator BYRD is a mentor of mine.

I have had the good fortunate of serving with him in the Senate since 1986. In these 19 years, I've gotten to know Senator BYRD and Erma well. They are a wonderful couple, delightful individuals, and I am honored to call them both friends.

Senator BYRD and Erma have no doubt seen many changes over their 68 years of marriage—none bigger than the size of their family. They have two daughters—Mona and Marjorie—and over a dozen grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Of course, no one can talk about Mr. and Mrs. ROBERT BYRD without recalling how they came to be together. He used sweets to get to her heart.

In school, a young ROBERT BYRD used to take sweets from a fellow classmate but he wouldn't eat them. He would store them up and give them to Erma when he met her in the hall. Years later he would say: "That's the way you court a girl—with another boy's bubble gum."

I have said many times that the Members of this Chamber are a family. And what an amazing example of family we have in Senator BYRD and Erma.

For 68 years of marriage, they have set a high standard for us all. It is a tribute to their love for each other, and for the rich, productive life they have enjoyed.

I congratulate them once again and pray for many more years of happiness together.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, this coming Monday, Americans across the Nation will hang flags at their doors and place small flags and flowers on the gravesites of loved ones and soldiers in a tradition that stretches deep into history, perhaps back to the advent of warfare.

The selection of the last Monday in May is unique to the United States, but remembering and honoring those fallen in battle is deeply ingrained in the human heart. On this day, these sons and fathers, uncles and brothers and, more recently, daughters and mothers, aunts and nieces are family members to us all. Lost to us too early, their images remain frozen in time,

young faces trying to look stern in crisp uniforms. Their sacrifices on battlefields from the Argonne to Tripoli, Pearl Harbor to Iwo Jima, Porkchop Hill to Hamburger Hill, Kabul to Baghdad have kept the Nation safe and carried the American ideals of liberty and democracy across the surface of the globe.

This week, as the Senate struggled and ultimately overcame an arcane but fundamental challenge to our constitutional system of checks and balances, we have, I believe, honored the memory of all of those soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. They defended the Nation and the Constitution from without; a bipartisan group of Senators this week defended it from within, thank God.

I rejoice that 14 Senators could rise above partisan politics to understand and preserve the carefully crafted balance of powers inscribed in our Constitution. Without the Constitution, the millions of lives and billions of dollars spent over the years on our Nation's defense, the flower of our youth and our hard-earned treasure, would have gone for naught. Our form of Government, acknowledging the might of the majority but protecting the rights of the minority, balancing populous States against States with smaller populations, preserving the voice and will of the people as the ultimate check against the rise of a tyrant king, that is our greatest treasure. It is the preservation of our form of Government that merits committing our young to the bloody horrors of battle.

It is perhaps appropriate, in this context, that the Senate's battle is concluded just before Memorial Day, which originated after our Nation's most divisive and bloody war ever fought on our home soil. The Civil War pit over 2.2 million Union soldiers against just over 1 million Confederate soldiers, resulting in almost 600,000 deaths, a third in battle and the rest from war's accompanying furies of disease and privation. It is a tribute to the heart's powers of healing that soon after the war, individuals and communities could put aside their differences in the graveyard and simply mourn their losses together.

Over 42 million American patriots have risked their lives for our Nation since the Revolutionary War. Over 17 million war veterans, of among over 25 million veterans of military service, live among us still. I salute them all, and thank them and their families for their bravery and their patriotism.

Of the 42 million Americans who saw battle during their military service, over 650,000 died in battle. That is 650,000 families who received the terrible news that their loved one had been killed. In World War II, the tragic news often came by telegram, and Americans learned to dread the sight of those envelopes.

As of May 23, 2005, in connection with Operation Iraqi Freedom, 1,623 families have answered the door to the solemn faces of two officers whose hard duty it

is to report the tragic news that another life has been lost. Another 186 families have gotten the same sad news coming from Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. My prayers go out to these families. There are no words that can console the grieving heart at times like these. The widow's flag, folded with care after a military ceremony, offers little comfort. But these brave men and women, and the families they leave behind, are part of a long chain of sacrifice and grief that firm the resolve of the Nation. Never should we forget their service to the Nation and the Constitution. Never should we squander their sacrifice on momentary partisan advantages that erode the integrity of the Constitution and, in turn, the continued health and vitality of our form of government.

On this Memorial Day, and on every Memorial Day, I urge Americans to put out their flags and to honor the fallen. I further urge them, in the spirit of those first Memorial Days, to put aside partisanship in favor of true patriotism, and to love and preserve our Nation and our Constitution in a lasting tribute to those who have given their lives in its defense.

As is my custom on these occasions, I would like to close with a poem. This piece is by Edgar Guest, and is called, "Memorial Day."

MEMORIAL DAY

The finest tribute we can pay
 Unto our hero dead today,
 Is not a rose wreath, white and red,
 In memory of the blood they shed;
 It is to stand beside each mound,
 Each couch of consecrated ground,
 And pledge ourselves as warriors true
 Unto the work they died to do.
 Into God's valleys where they lie
 At rest, beneath the open sky,
 Triumphant now o'er every foe,
 As living tributes let us go.
 No wreath of rose or immortelles
 Or spoken word or tolling bells
 Will do today, unless we give
 Our pledge that liberty shall live.
 Our hearts must be the roses red
 We place above our hero dead;
 Today beside their graves we must
 Renew allegiance to their trust;
 Must bare our heads and humbly say
 We hold the Flag as dear as they,
 And stand, as once they stood, to die
 To keep the Stars and Stripes on high.
 The finest tribute we can pay
 Unto our hero dead today
 Is not of speech or roses red,
 But living, throbbing hearts instead,
 That shall renew the pledge they sealed
 With death upon the battlefield;
 That freedom's flag shall bear no stain
 And free men wear no tyrant's chain.
 "No Tyrant's Chain."
 I yield the floor.

CONGRATULATIONS TO BETTY SIEGEL

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise to memorialize in the RECORD of the Senate the name of a great educator in the State of Georgia. Two weeks ago at the commencement exercises of Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw,