

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN REMEMBRANCE OF AN
EXTRAORDINARY VETERAN

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 10, 2007

Ms. WILSON of New Mexico. Madam Speaker, on June 17, 2007, our nation lost a wonderful man and veteran: Agapito "Gap" Encinias Silva, from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Gap was a man of extraordinary character. A World War II veteran, Gap was a member of the distinguished 200th Coastal Artillery, a unit from the New Mexico Army National Guard. Gap found himself stationed at Fort Stotsenberg on Clark Field in the Philippines when World War II broke out.

Along with his fellow soldiers, Gap became one of the "Batling Bastards of Bataan" who held out on the peninsula until they had nothing more to fight with. He survived the infamous Bataan Death March and was interned by the Japanese as a POW for 3½ years. For his service, Gap Silva earned the Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts, along with numerous other decorations. Gap's courage during those difficult years still stands as a testament to the strength and the resilience of the human spirit.

When he came back home, Gap continued to be active within the veteran community, choosing to be involved with organizations such as the Bataan Veterans organization, the American Ex-POWS, the Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion and the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor. Gap selflessly gave of himself to other veterans to help them with their needs, and to make a difference in their lives. Gap was indeed a leader for his fellow New Mexican veterans. He will be greatly missed.

I first met Gap through his son, whom I worked with in State government. I got to know him even better while working on veterans issues as a Member of Congress. There are a handful of people who really stand out and make an impression on you during the course of one's work. Gap was one of those. He brought dignity and grace to his community service.

Gap is survived by his wife, Socorro, and their seven children, Fred, Patricia, Michael, Agapito Jr., Maurice, Jerome and Erlinda Silva. Gap is also survived by twelve grandchildren: Reina Silva, Thomas Silva, Theresa Utah, Phillip Silva, Emma Gonzales, Danielle Gonzales, James Gonzales, Amanda Silva, Melanie Silva, Rachel Silva, and Emily Silva. Gap also had several great grandchildren, to help carry on his family legacy: Nyssa, Gianna, Jayden, Jude and Sophia. In addition, Gap is survived by his sister Jennie Noriega and by many nieces and nephews.

Madam Speaker, please join with me in paying tribute to Agapito "Gap" Encinias Silva; an unforgettable American hero.

IN TRIBUTE TO LARRY EPSTEIN

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 10, 2007

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Larry Epstein, a decorated veteran of the U.S. Army, whose long service and dedication to the country are deserving of special note. A man of great integrity and honor, Mr. Epstein has been a community leader and an activist on veterans' issues.

I came to know Mr. Epstein through his leadership in the veterans community. He is commander of the New York County Council of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA (JWV), commander of Florence Greenwald Manhattan Post 1 and a national service officer of the JWV.

Mr. Epstein was deeply involved in the effort to save the New York campus of the New York Harbor Healthcare System, located at 23rd Street and 1st Avenue in Manhattan. He devoted time and effort to organizing veterans to provide comments to the CARES Commission in support of the hospital. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Epstein and all of those who rallied behind the hospital, we were able to preserve an institution that provides high quality care to thousands of New York veterans. Most recently, Mr. Epstein joined me and Congressman JOSEPH CROWLEY in calling for an overall increase in Federal assistance to provide adequate health care for America's wounded troops.

Mr. Epstein had a long and distinguished career in the U.S. military and Reserves that commenced in 1967 and spanned three decades. From the Vietnam era through Desert Shield, Mr. Epstein served our country honorably and with great distinction, demonstrating the highest caliber of dedication.

Mr. Epstein is a graduate of the National Defense University and the United States Army War College class of '92. He has served in the 101st Airborne and has been a staff officer at EUCOM, SOUTHCOM, and PACOM. Among his awards are the National Defense Service Medal with star, Army Commendation with 2 Oak leaves, Reserve Commendation Medal and the Legion of Merit for service in Panama. He has been awarded the Conspicuous Service Star by the New York State Department of Military Affairs. His badges include Air Assault and Israeli Airborne Wings.

In his civilian life, Mr. Epstein has been a computer consultant, private detective, and real estate developer. In Ocean County, New Jersey, he was chairman of the Planning Board of the Township of Ocean. He also served as the local Democratic County Committee chairman. Mr. Epstein ran for Ocean County Freeholder. Although he lost the race, he exceeded expectations by garnering 20,000 more votes than any Democratic candidate for the seat in the preceding decade. The support he received is a testament to his

hard work, dedication to his community and effectiveness.

Tragically, Mr. Epstein is suffering from the fatal neurodegenerative disease ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease. Shockingly, a study conducted by the ALS Association found that men and women who have served in the Armed Forces have a 60 percent greater chance of contracting ALS. No one knows why. On the average, the survival rate is 2 to 5 years after diagnosis. Despite his grave illness, Mr. Epstein continues to work on behalf of his fellow veterans.

Madam Speaker, I ask my distinguished colleagues to join me in recognizing a true hero, Larry Epstein. He exemplifies the ideals of compassion, diligence and loyalty to his comrades.

TRIBUTE TO REAR ADMIRAL (SEL)
EARL LENELL GAY

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 10, 2007

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this means to recognize the outstanding military service and contributions to our country of Rear Admiral (Sel) Earl Lenell Gay, U.S. Navy, on the occasion of his completion of assignment as Director, Navy Congressional Liaison, U.S. House of Representatives.

A native of Atlanta, GA, RADM (Sel) Earl Gay is a 1980 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. After attending flight school, he earned his pilot wings of gold in 1981. During several tours, he commanded a fleet operational helicopter squadron and the Fleet Training Squadron for all SH-60 aircraft. Selected to major command, he served as Commanding Officer of the Amphibious Assault Carrier, USS *Belleau Wood* (LHA 3) from March 2003 to October 2004, participating in combat support operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Rear Admiral (Sel) Gay was selected to serve as Director, Navy House Liaison in December 2004. In this highly visible tour, he assisted in the passage of critical Navy budget legislation during the 108th, 109th, and 110th Congresses. Additionally, he planned and led 29 Congressional Delegations (CODELs) across the globe that included meetings with various world leaders in support of America's national security policy. His counsel to me and other Members of the House has proved invaluable in articulating the Navy's vision to Congress.

Please join me and our colleagues in thanking Rear Admiral (Sel) Gay and his family for their tireless contributions to a grateful Nation and in wishing them the best in their future.

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