

honor of the Silver Beaver Award. He was active in the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, which supports achievement in every field of human endeavor. Colonel Sherman also served on the board of directors of the Nevada Black Chamber of Commerce. And he continued to inspire young people to pursue opportunities in aviation though numerous speaking engagements across southern Nevada.

Again, Mr. President, we have lost a true hero. Our thoughts are with his family and loved ones.

#### TRIBUTES TO RUTH MULAN CHU CHAO

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to remember a woman whose life, to a remarkable degree, traced the very arc of the American dream. Ruth Mulan Chu Chao returned home to the Lord on August 2, 2007, and today is the Seventh Seventh Day of her departure, an important day in Chinese tradition.

The story of her struggle to bring hope and opportunity to a family that had verged on losing both is an inspiration to all who knew her. On August 11, 2007, I had the honor of retelling my mother-in-law's life story at a private celebration of life and thanksgiving service in New York City that was attended by her many family, friends, admirers, and acquaintances.

It is my hope that by preserving my tribute, along with that of my wife, Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao, that the memory of this remarkable woman will live on not only for the benefit of those who knew her but for all who cherish the promise of America. May its placement in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD serve as a lasting tribute to the millions of men and women who, like Ruth Mulan Chu Chao, struggled to see that promise fulfilled. Ruth's story is the story of America. It deserves to be heard.

I ask unanimous consent that my tribute and that of Secretary Elaine Chao be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

#### TRIBUTE BY SENATOR McCONNELL

Sophocles said that "One must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been." And we could say the same thing about the modest woman we mourn today. Ruth Chao put the lives of others ahead of her own for as long as anyone could remember. And, in the end, we all knew that this was the secret of her truly remarkable life.

As a young girl, she was torn from the beauty of her native home by an invading army, then secretly returned at great risk to herself to retrieve the family's belongings. As a young wife and mother, she was separated from her husband for three years, but consoled him with letters of encouragement, optimism, and hope. And as a loving mother of six daughters, she would diligently devote the rest of her years to them.

She had been at sea for more than a month in the summer of 1961 when she leaned over the rail toward the giant woman in New York harbor, and prayed that her family would be safe in this new and foreign place.

There was no guarantee that the journey would end well. But in the years to come, Ruth Chao would quietly do all she could to ensure that her family lived up to the promise of America.

The cultural divide was as wide as the ocean that brought them here. One early shock came at the end of October, when a group of children showed up at the front door with masks on their faces. The neighbors knew it was Halloween. The Chao family thought they were being robbed. Most of the cultural difficulties were harder to bear. But they made it through. They had their anchor. It was Ruth.

In time, the family would learn the language and the culture. The daughters would go on to the best universities in the country, and anyone who visited the house in Harrison would learn the wisdom of the Chinese Proverb which says that "Those who plant melons grow melons; those who plant beans produce beans." Ruth's devotion to her husband and her daughters was complete and total. And it showed.

She was never more herself than when she fell ill. She said that if someone in the family had to be sick, better that it be her. She had fewer responsibilities than the others, she said. It was an astonishing thing to hear. But it didn't surprise anyone who knew her. From the shadow of the Purple Mountain of Nanjing, to the bitterness of exile, to the uncertainty of a new life in a strange place, to the heartbreak of a long illness, she put herself last so that others might be first.

The Scriptures that she loved tell us that "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Ruth Chao made this promise her own. She left this life as she lived it, giving of herself, even at the end, for others. And all of us are grateful for the harvest that she reaped.

#### TRIBUTE BY SECRETARY CHAO

My father, Dr. James S. C. Chao; sisters: Jeanette, May, Christine, Grace, Angela; the rest of our family, and I want to thank you so much—especially those who have traveled so far—for coming and helping us celebrate the life and legacy of our beloved mother, Ruth Mulan Chu Chao.

My mother is a modest and humble person who never wanted to trouble anyone. We did not notify many people formally but the volume of condolence wishes have been so spontaneous, heartfelt, and overwhelming. We are very touched.

Mother went home to the Lord a week ago last Thursday, after a heroic seven-year battle with lymphoma. In fact, her initial diagnosis came on the same day that the President announced my nomination as the Secretary of Labor. Our mother confronted this struggle as she did every challenge in her life—with courage, selfless concern for others, and a serenity that came from the belief that God had a purpose for her in life.

She and my father are part of a generation that experienced much suffering, but achieved great things. Mother and Father, like so many Chinese in the 20th century, endured the terror of foreign invasions, the chaos of domestic turmoil, and the heartbreak of dislocations in their native land. Despite all the terrible things they saw, they refused to be defeated by them and remained positive and optimistic their entire life.

Mother's courage in the face of great suffering was the product of a strong faith, rooted in a deep love for the Lord, her husband and her family. It gave her the strength to be a pioneer for women of her generation, and to leave a legacy that extends far beyond her immediate family.

Mother was ahead of her time even as a young woman, when she saw the promise of

her future husband, James S. C. Chao, long before others, and pledged her love and her life to him unconditionally. Her American name, Ruth, which was given to her by a missionary, is very appropriate because—as the Biblical Ruth promised in Chapter 1:16—"whither thou goest, I will go."

For my father's part, her graceful bearing, dignity, cultured upbringing and beauty ensured that his heart was hers forever. As Proverbs 31:10-12 say, "When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. She brings him good . . . all the days of her life."

Mother's virtuous character was the foundation of our family and all that we have been able to achieve. Her loving, steady leadership at home alleviated all of Father's worries and enabled him to travel far and wide to seek opportunities to better life for the family. Mother was seven months pregnant with my sister, May, when Father left to go to America. During their three long years of separation, they were faithful to one another, to God and to every promise that they made.

Three years later, Mother risked everything, leaving her family and all that was familiar behind to join him, taking another great leap of faith. Moving to America may seem more commonplace now, but back then it was a courageous and bold step, especially because America was not nearly as ethnically diverse as it is today. Mother was a pioneer who led the way for those who came afterwards, and their contributions helped our country grow in the diversity and strength that makes it the envy of the world today.

Resettled in America, Mother paved the way for her daughters' successes by nurturing us physically and imbuing us with thinking and attitudes that were, again, ahead of their time. Mother always believed that women could be just as valued and accomplished as men. She also believed that the most important adornments for a woman were virtue, intellect and achievement. In fact, at the age of 51, she went back to school to St. John's University to earn a master's degree in Asian literature and history. She taught us to lead virtuous lives by her own example of being virtuous in everything she did and said. She is our model of dignity, propriety and purity of heart.

Mother gave expression to her strong faith and love not only through the example she set for us, but in giving herself wholeheartedly to her church and to her community. She touched the lives of many outside our family through her volunteer work in the church and in the community, often done quietly and without fanfare.

Mother's life spanned two worlds—Asia and America—and she played a role in building bridges of understanding between them. She never forgot where she came from, establishing several charitable foundations with Father that are helping young people in Asia and America access higher education and opportunity. She has planted thousands of seeds throughout her life that will blossom over time and produce many improvements in our world in the future.

As Mother faced the final challenge of her life, she never complained even though the ravages of the illness ensured that she was never without pain. Her only thoughts and words were always expressions of concern for others. When I would accompany her in the hospital, she would look quizzically at me and ask, "Shouldn't you be at work? The people and the country are depending on you."

During her illness, my parents switched roles. Mother had taken care of Father throughout her life. Now, he took care of

her, ferociously and protectively monitoring every detail of her care at every stage. So much so that one of the doctors joked that my father was practicing medicine without a license. Throughout this difficult time, the devotion of my parents to one another was like a shining beacon, drawing everyone to them with its intensity and warmth.

Nearly half a century ago, Father came to America to prepare a place for his young wife and their children. Now, Mother has gone to prepare a place for him and for us—an everlasting home with the Lord that will never end and where every tear will be wiped away. We are consoled by the knowledge that we will see Mother again with her usual smile, healthy and strong.

Until then, Mother is with us every day in our hearts and in our lives as an enduring inspiration, spurring us forward to contribute to society and make a difference in this world.

#### HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to engage in a colloquy with my friend the distinguished Senator from Colorado, Mr. KEN SALAZAR, who I have the pleasure of serving with as cochair of the Senate Democratic Hispanic Task Force.

As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, I would like to spend a moment talking about the landmark 1947 discrimination case *Mendez v. Westminster*, which established the legal precedent on which *Brown v. Board of Education* was based. It is an extremely important piece of our civil rights history, but sadly, it is often overlooked. Senator SALAZAR and I would like to remedy that.

Let me illustrate the importance of this case. I want you to picture two students, both equally bright, eager to learn, and full of possibility. One student sits in a beautiful new school building surrounded by the best books, a good heating system, and a clean cafeteria. The other sits in a dilapidated old shed with torn and tattered books that are far too old. The heat doesn't work because there's no furnace, and the cafeteria doesn't exist. As you all know, this was what occurred in towns throughout our country for far too long before *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that separate was inherently unequal.

Sylvia Mendez, a victim of separate but equal before *Brown v. Board of Education*, was only 8 years old when she and her brothers were prohibited from attending a Whites-only school in Westminster, CA, in Orange County. Her father, along with five other Mexican-American fathers whose children were forced to attend subpar, segregated schools, challenged school segregation in the U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, claiming their children were victims of unconstitutional discrimination. This historic court battle ultimately ended school segregation in California and set in motion the legal process that would eventually end school segregation in America.

Mr. SALAZAR. Like my colleague Senator BOB MENENDEZ, I believe it is

critical to recognize the contributions that Sylvia Mendez and her family have made to the advancement of civil rights. The Mendez family's struggle for equality is a reminder to me that we must continue to fight for equal and quality education for all our children.

Sadly, many young Hispanic students today attend schools that are lacking in resources, equipment, and highly qualified teachers. Nationally, Latinos are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their White counterparts and only 1 in 10 Latinos has obtained a 4-year college degree. Reforms to our education system are clearly needed to address these disparities and continue the legacy of Sylvia Menendez.

Education is a critical pathway to realizing the American dream. It is what allows every child to transcend the barriers of race, class, background, or disability to achieve their potential to be what they choose in life. A wise historian once said that, "Education is the means by which we exult our successes and remedy our failures and the process by which we transmit our civilization from one generation to the next."

We take this moment to recommit ourselves to uphold the legacy of Sylvia Mendez and her brothers. This is what Hispanic Heritage Month is all about.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I thank Senator KEN SALAZAR for the work he does on the Senate Democratic Hispanic Task Force on behalf of Latinos. My colleague understands, like I do, that we must not only celebrate the accomplishments of Latinos but turn to the future in to ensure that Latinos are protected by our laws and able to achieve the American dream. Sylvia Mendez, who has become a premier civil rights advocate and leader as a result of this case, is a clear example of what it means to achieve that dream.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### HONORING LOUISE SEIKEL

• Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, which I am honored to chair, oversees the Department of Veterans Affairs, the second largest Cabinet level department in the United States. A person who works for Veterans Affairs is joined by roughly 245,000 fellow employees, each of whom plays a role in fulfilling our Nation's obligation to those who have served. In an organization of that magnitude, there is a real risk of overlooking the importance of the contributions made by individual VA employees. Today I want to recognize one such employee, who celebrated her 50th year of working for veterans this past Sunday.

Louise Seikel, a certified registered nurse anesthetist in Brooklyn, NY, has spent the last half century serving those who have served our country. To

put this into perspective, I note that Louise has done this under 10 U.S. Presidents, and had provided care to veterans for over three decades before the first Secretary of Veterans' Affairs was appointed to the President's Cabinet. When she began, she and her colleagues cared for wounded warriors who were born in the 19th century, and today she is part of the health administration caring for those wounded in the conflicts of the 21st century.

Louise has served countless numbers of veterans, and I cannot put into words the immeasurable impact she has made. What I can do, however understated it may be, is give her my heartfelt thanks. Louise has earned it.

In that spirit I say to Louise Seikel, on behalf of every life you have touched and the grateful Nation you continue to serve, mahalo nui loa. Thank you so very much for your public service.●

##### IN RECOGNITION OF JANET TURCOTTE

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to recognize one of my constituents, Janet Turcotte of Bowie, Maryland. I was fortunate to meet Janet in March of this year when she visited my Washington office. She came as part of C3, the Colorectal Cancer Coalition, a group whose mission is to eliminate suffering and death due to colorectal cancer.

Janet is a talented embroiderer, and for more than 20 years she has been decorating saddlecloths for the thoroughbreds at Maryland's Pimlico Race Course. For the past 2 years, she has added the colorectal cancer "Blue Star of Hope" to the saddlecloths of the contenders for the Preakness Stakes at Pimlico. Recognizing that the Preakness has more than 17 million television viewers each year, Janet aims to use this symbol to encourage early screening for colorectal cancer, and to save lives. Janet graciously brought me one of those "Blue Star" saddlecloths, which is now displayed in my personal office.

Janet Turcotte is far more than an advocate for colorectal health. She is also a patient. First diagnosed with stage IV colorectal cancer 4 years ago, she is currently battling her third recurrence of the disease. Last week, Janet's doctors told her that she does not have much time left.

Janet's message to Congress and to all Americans is an urgent and important one. It is that early screening, diagnosis and treatment of colon cancer can save lives. The American Cancer Society, whose members will visit Capitol Hill soon, reports that in 2006, more than 150,000 new cases of colon cancer were diagnosed and more than 50,000 Americans died from the disease, including more than 1,000 Marylanders.

I ask my colleagues to join me in extending our appreciation to Janet Turcotte, a dedicated and courageous advocate for colorectal health, for her