

THANKING TAEKWONDO GRAND MASTER JHOON RHEE FOR HIS 45 YEARS OF SERVICE TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

HON. ENI F.H. FALDOMAEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Mr. FALDOMAEGA. Madam Speaker, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee is a man of rare character. An immigrant from South Korea who came to the United States in the 1950s, later to be known as the "Father of American Taekwondo," he has become an American symbol of patriotism, service, and excellence.

Today, we celebrate Grand Master Rhee's 45 years of service sharing his wisdom, experience, and knowledge as a Taekwondo instructor with over 350 members of Congress. Yet beyond the contributions he has made to members of Congress for almost half a century, Grand Master Rhee has served this country through countless acts of service. Thought time does not permit me to share them all, please allow me to share some of the highlights today and give due honor to a man who truly makes me proud to be an American.

Born on January 7, 1932 in South Korea during the period of Japanese occupation, Mr. Rhee began training in the martial arts at the age of 13. Serving as an officer in the Korean War, Rhee fought alongside American soldiers, where he gained a deep appreciation for the country that he now calls home.

Rhee immigrated to the United States in 1956, introducing Taekwondo to the Nation. A World-renowned 10th Degree Black Belt, he has instructed and inspired students around the world. In addition to the over 350 members of Congress he has instructed over the past 45 years, Grand Master Rhee has also shared his wisdom and knowledge with the likes of Muhammad Ali, Jack Anderson, George Allen Sr., Bob Livingston, Tony Robbins, and Jack Valenti.

Yet his service does not end here. In 1983, Mr. Rhee—a symbol of patriotism—served as National Chairman of the July 4th, 1983 Nation's Birthday Celebration. In 1984, President Ronald Reagan appointed him to the National Council on Vocational Education, where he created National Teacher Appreciation Day—a day of honor for our Nation's educators which was signed by President Ronald Reagan on October 16, 1986, and continues today.

From 1988 to 1991, he served as President George H.W. Bush's appointment as Special Advisor to the President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports, and on March 17, 1992 he was selected as the President's 721st "Daily Point of Light"—an award that honors individuals and volunteer groups around the country who are helping to meet critical needs in their communities.

In 1999, Rhee received the American Immigrants Achievement Award and the National Association of Professional Martial Arts, NAPMA, Life Time Achievement Award, and in 2000, he became the only Korean-American named by the National Immigrant Forum and the Immigration and Naturalization Services as one of the 203 most recognized immigrants in the country, along with Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell and 200 others. Rhee was also inducted into the Taekwondo Hall of

Fame in 2007 as both the "Pioneer of American Taekwondo" and the "Pioneer of Taekwon-Do in Russia." He currently has over 60 affiliated Tae Kwon Do studios in the U.S. and 65 in the former Soviet Union.

It takes but a moment in Grand Master Rhee's presence to sense his honor for this country and to see that he truly exemplifies the American spirit. He is a living reminder of the goodness of this nation to the U.S. and the world. I must echo my dear friend, Congressman Ike Skelton, who once said, "I might say Master Jhoon Rhee has become a national treasure."

But what better way to gain a deeper sense of this man's rare patriotism and love for America, than in his own words. In a recent statement shared with my office, Grand Master Rhee wrote, "I fought the Korean War side by side with American soldiers, who came to defend a country they never heard of, people they never knew. This is why I wanted to do something for what America had done for my motherland, Korea, with what I can do the best, TKD [Taekwondo]. The sense of my gratitude for America gave me the energy to get up 5 AM, 3 mornings a week for the last 45 years to teach over 350 members of U.S. Congress, as my volunteer service; I will give 5 more years to make it five decades of my service."

Reflecting on the strength of this nation, Grand Master Rhee stated, "I became curious what made America so great. In my sincere search for the roots of America's strength, I found the noblest mission statement ever written by any country in history. American Founding Fathers wrote the 'Mission Statement of America' to place upon America the responsibility of serving as the vanguard nation for the moral and political Freedom of all mankind, not just for American people. No wonder, why Alexis De Tocqueville, a French Juror in 1831, wrote: 'America is great because She is good; if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.'"

Today I ask my fellow members of Congress to honor a man whose character, patriotism, and heart of service calls for our sincere respect and gratitude. Grand Master Rhee, today I celebrate and thank you for your 45 years of service to the members of this Chamber and the Senate. More importantly, I thank you for your example to the citizens of this Nation—for increasing the hope within each of us, for reminding us of the beauty and strength of our nation, and for inspiring individuals and groups of every walk of life to continually press towards the call to take it higher and make it better.

TRIBUTE TO GENE YEAGER

HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Mr. CALVERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the life of Ernest Eugene "Gene" Yeager, a successful businessman, philanthropist, outstanding community member and close personal friend of mine. On Sunday, September 5, 2010, Gene passed away at the age of 85. Although Gene has passed on from this life, he leaves a lasting legacy of generosity and accomplishment that will never be forgotten.

More than 700 people gathered to pay tribute to Gene at the California Baptist University quad, just behind the center that bears his name. The two-hour service brought together people throughout the community that Gene touched during his life, including industry leaders, former employees, friends and family members. Gene's life tells the tale of a man who turned his business empire into a conduit for blessing the lives of people around him.

Gene Yeager was born in Riverside in 1924. He graduated from Poly High School in 1942 and studied engineering at the University of California at Berkeley. In 1943, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy. After World War II ended, he returned to Berkeley, where he received his bachelor's degree in civil engineering. Together with his two brothers, Richard and Jacques, they went to work for their father, Ernest Louis Yeager, who founded E.L. Yeager Construction Company in Riverside in 1919. Gene ran the public works side of the operations business which worked on projects to improve major freeways, dams and bridges. The brothers turned the business into one of the largest public works and private construction companies in the United States, and one that changed the landscape of Southern California.

With Gene at the head, the Yeager Company rebuilt two bridges that collapsed in the 1994 Northridge earthquake, built the Highway 91/Interstate 15 interchange in Corona, built the dam at Lake Perris and helped erect the Auto Club Speedway in Fontana.

After Richard was killed in a traffic accident in 1979, Gene and Jacques continued to run the company until 1995, when they sold it to a group of senior managers. In 2002, the business was sold to Skanska, the Swedish construction giant.

Through the years, Gene had become a leader and an industry icon. He is remembered just as fondly by his construction workers as he is with the people at Skanska, because of his intense work ethic and generous heart.

After retiring in 1995, Gene set about traveling the world with his wife, spending time with his family and generously making donations to worthy causes in the Riverside area, including a \$1 million endowment to fund environmental research and scholarships at the University of California at Riverside.

In fact, his charitable work earned him "guardian angel" status in Riverside. Everyone that knew Gene, knew that he gave from the heart, and did so without any desire for recognition.

In addition to his wife, Billie, Mr. Yeager is survived by sons Ken, of San Jose, and Tom, of Riverside; daughters Beth, of Norco, and Louise, of Newport Beach; stepchildren Terri, of Riverside, and Doug Moore, of Rancho Cucamonga; brother Jacques, of Riverside; nephew Jacques Jr., of Riverside; and 13 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

On behalf of all those who knew him, it is an honor to offer these remarks as a tribute to the life and legacy of my friend Gene Yeager. His life and presence will be sorely missed and I extend my condolences to his dear family and friends.