

was riding a Greyhound bus from my sister's home in Beaumont, Texas, to my hometown of Somerset, KY.

Somewhere along the way, in a small town in Arkansas, I saw from the window a young Marine, resplendent in his dress blue uniform. The glamour of that uniform and the obvious pride of the man wearing it captivated me. At that moment I decided to volunteer for the Marines, and I did so as soon as I arrived in Somerset.

After my introduction into the Marine Corps, I endured weeks of stress and intimidation in boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, followed by combat training at Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California. After completing my training, my unit boarded a troopship, the USS General William Weigel, and after two weeks at sea, we landed in Yokuska, Japan.

On June 5, 1951, I arrived in Korea and became a member of George Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Division, later nicknamed "Bloody George." The day I arrived, I was transported to the front line and immediately entered combat. My unit was under heavy fire. They had just lost a machine gunner and were asking for a volunteer. Fools really do rush in where angels fear to tread, and I volunteered for the position. I served as a machine gunner for the duration of my time in Korea.

Minutes after I arrived on the line, a mortar shell hit a few feet from me. Luckily, it turned out to be a dud. If it had exploded, I would almost certainly have been killed on my first day of battle. As it was, I was wounded by another mortar a few months later, on September 21, 1951. We were on Hill 751, which came to be known as "Starvation Hill."

For three days and three nights, the fighting was so intense that our Korean supply carriers could only bring ammunition. Food was a lower priority in this situation than the much-needed ammo, so we had to make do with what we had until the shelling diminished.

A friend of mine was hit, and I climbed out of my foxhole to help him. While I was out of the foxhole, a mortar shell came in. It killed two officers and wounded six enlisted men. The irony of the situation was that the mortar landed closer to me than to anyone else, but the explosion propelled shrapnel that embedded only small pieces of metal in my legs and head, while dispersing larger pieces to the men who were killed or more seriously wounded.

The mind is a strange and wonderful thing. If I close my eyes, even to this day, I can still see the dirt, debris and shrapnel exploding as clearly as I could at the moment it happened. Fifty-five years later, I still have small fragments of that mortar in my legs and forehead. During the months that I served in Korea, I saw great acts of courage by my fellow Marines as they dealt with the brutality and mayhem of war. I came to realize that heroism often involves reacting to a situation in a way that seems to be most expedient at a given moment.

I recall many images of the horrors of war, of course, but I also remember my fellow Marines, courageous young men with whom I shared the most intense life-and-death experiences most of us would ever face.

While I was still in combat in Korea, I wrote the following poem. My experiences there gave me a love and appreciation for America that I might never have been able to express had I not had the opportunity to serve my country in this way.

Today I am 77 years old and looking back on my own wartime experiences from the vantage point of a healthy and successful life. I hear the stories of today's young Marines who are risking their bodies and lives

for the same principles that motivated me and my comrades in Korea so many years ago. For any soldier or Marine who serves his country in time of any war, I believe this poem expresses the love and pride that he feels for his homeland, the United States.

MR. YOU AND MR. ME

What is America? I ask myself,
It is happiness, contentment, success and wealth,

With a touch of hardship, dirt and grime,
Mixed together with work and time,
Is Mr. You or Mr. Me?

America is a sweetheart, modest and dear,
It's high school and college, or a cheerleader's cheer.

It's a bright hello or a sad good-bye,
It's all these things and much more too,
That go into making the Red, White and Blue.

America is football, baseball and track,
Or just a little afternoon snack.

It's a drive in the country, a walk into town,
or just a policeman making his round.
It's a chocolate sundae or a picture show
That forms the pattern of this land we know.

It's Mom and Dad—Sister too,
And a little brother, or me and you.

It's Brooklyn and Jersey, the Dodgers and Phils,

Or a beautiful river with valleys and hills.
But it takes these things and the heavens above

To make our America, the land we love.

It's barefoot boys who skip school for fishing,

And pigtailed girls who tag along, wishing.
It's the old and the young, the brave and the true,

But mostly America is made up of you.
It's what you believe and what you can see
That count in this land of democracy.

The names of Washington, Lincoln and Jones,

The Tom Smiths, Dick Phillips, and Harry Malones

Are parts of America we see every day
As we walk along its crowded highway.

Yes, all of these things we daily see,
Until they are a part of you and me.

America is brown, yellow and white,
With a touch of red, it's quite a sight,
For we are a mixture from many lands
Who believe in liberty and freedom's stands,
And we back up this faith with blood and tears

Shed by patriots throughout the years.

It's soldiers, sailors, pilots, Marines,
Who make up our nation's fighting machines.

It's "blood and guts" when the time demands,

For freedom's cause we take our stands.

It's all America, just one big show,
Of the things we do and the things we know.

It's our faith in God to do His will,
Our belief that we have His protection still,
That makes America strong and free,
It's a wonderful place for you and me.

And though many places our feet may roam,
May they safely return us to our home,
America.

TRIBUTE TO TOM BIRCH

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, it is a distinct honor and privilege for me to congratulate Thomas L. Birch, the legislative counsel and founding director, of the National Child Abuse Coalition, for his decades of service to children.

After more than 30 years as head of the coalition, Tom is retiring. Mr.

Birch established the National Child Abuse Coalition three decades ago as a way to focus greater attention on the more than 700,000 children who are abused and neglected each year.

From his earliest days, Tom was inspired to make a difference in the lives of some of our most vulnerable children and families. His interest was first peaked as a high school student working at a public housing project in Stamford, CT. He noticed that not all kids had the same opportunity and that not all children had the same start at life. His experiences also demonstrated that with the right kind of support, we could make a difference in these young lives. We could even the playing field.

Tom continued on to college and became an attorney, but when he reached Washington, he brought with him that same passion to make a difference. We all talk about how important children are to this country's future, but Tom felt you had to do more than just say that—he had to act. He began his new job on Capitol Hill working for the chair of what we now call the HELP Committee, under Senator Walter Mondale. In fact, the week Tom Birch started his work for the future Vice President, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, or CAPTA, was signed into law. He would continue advocating for children and the prevention of child abuse by working on the staffs of Senator Paul Simon and Congressman John Brademas.

When Tom ended his career as a Capitol Hill staffer he moved on but didn't move away from his main mission in life: to continue to make a difference for the most vulnerable children in the land. He formed a coalition to focus attention on preventing the abuse and neglect of children. In 1981 the National Child Abuse Coalition was created under the leadership of Mr. Birch. His pride and constant inspiration has been to shape the growth of CAPTA, and that, too, would be the mission of the coalition he founded.

Because of Tom Birch's efforts, more than 30 national member organizations, working through the coalition, have been able to coordinate and strengthen their Federal advocacy on behalf of the millions of vulnerable children. Through this time period Tom has contributed to important developments, including the creation of children's trust funds across the States; the establishment of national child abuse data; greater focus on community-based solutions, including the community-based grants to prevent child abuse and neglect; and more recently he and the coalition were an important voice of support for the new home visitation program enacted by Congress in 2010.

Through his leadership the coalition has also served as an advocate in the appropriations process for CAPTA and similar programs such as the Social Services Block Grant, SSBG, and the Promoting Safe and Stable Families

Program, PSSF. When opportunities have arisen he has worked to highlight ways to strengthen programs such as Head Start and childcare to make sure the country took every opportunity to address child neglect and to prevent it.

Others have recognized Mr. Birch's contributions, including the American Psychological Association, which honored him in 2003 with their Award for Distinguished Contribution to Child Advocacy. Later in 2006 Casey Family Programs honored Tom again by giving him their Leadership Award.

I want to join the many others in recognizing Tom Birch. These days we talk a great deal about lobbyists and special interests in Washington, DC, but there are certain groups of people here in Washington you don't hear about. They won't be featured on the evening news or the front page of the newspaper. These are the men and women who patiently and quietly walk these halls to tell the stories of vulnerable children. These people do it not to get rich or to promote the fortunes of the powerful; they work on behalf of our most vulnerable. Tom is one of these people, an unsung hero who has made a true difference for vulnerable children. It has been a job well done for Tom. I hope his retirement is successful and rewarding in every way he wishes it to be, and I thank him very much for all the contributions he has made to the lives of all the most vulnerable children all across this country.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I was mistakenly recorded as a "no" on vote No. 227 on December 12, 2011. I would like to state for the record I intended to vote for cloture in relation to the nomination of Mari Carmen Aponte to be Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT GRIFFIN III

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, in Texas, football and team loyalty is a key part of our identity. Today, I know that Baylor University students, alumni, and fans—known as the Baylor Nation—are bursting with pride over the first Bear to win the Heisman Trophy. Robert Griffin III was named the 2011 Heisman Trophy winner for his incredible accomplishments on the football field. Baylor finished this season ranked No. 15 nationally with a 9 to 3 record which included impressive victories over nationally ranked TCU, Oklahoma, and Texas. While Baylor and Big 12 fans have witnessed Griffin's football prowess, many more American sports fans will have the opportunity to watch him lead the Bears in the Valero Alamo Bowl on December 29, 2011.

But it is not only his football talent that makes Robert such a remarkable young man. RG3, as he is known to his friends and fans, is the consummate

student-athlete. An honor roll student at Baylor, he graduated with a degree in political science in only 3 years with a 3.67 GPA. While he was leading the Bears this year on the gridiron, he was studying for his master's degree in communications, and he has indicated that he would like to attend law school as well.

Robert's career at Baylor balances academics and athletics and should serve as a role model for other aspiring young athletes. The discipline to succeed was instilled in him at a very early age by his parents, Robert, Jr., and Jacqueline Griffin, both Army non-commissioned officers, who laid the groundwork for his strong work ethic. A graduate of Copperas Cove High School just outside Ft. Hood, Robert was a three-sport star athlete—he still owns Texas' High School State records for the 110-meter and 300-meter hurdles—and a top student.

Throughout his career at Baylor, Robert set 52 school records in passing, rushing, and total offense. He has thrown for an incredible 10,070 yards, and 77 touchdowns, while rushing for 2,220 yards and 32 touchdowns. During his impressive 2011 Heisman winning season, Robert passed for almost 4,000 yards and 36 touchdowns, while rushing for 655 yards and 7 touchdowns. He also earned the Davey O'Brien Award, presented annually to the best NCAA quarterback.

On Saturday, December 10, 2011, Robert Griffin III was recognized as the greatest college football player of the year. The Heisman Trophy is the most prestigious and coveted award in college sports, and no one is more deserving of this honor than Robert Griffin III.

Congratulations to Robert Griffin III on an incredible season; to his family, who provided the foundation for his abilities; to his teammates and the entire Baylor Nation. This is truly a storybook ending to a tremendous season.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on December 10, the most prestigious sports fraternity in the country welcomed its newest member, Baylor University's Robert Griffin III, as the 77th winner of the Heisman Memorial Trophy. Griffin is Baylor's first recipient of the Heisman Trophy and the first player from the school to be named a finalist for the award since quarterback Don Trull finished fourth in 1963. The son of two retired U.S. Army sergeants, Griffin led the 15th ranked Baylor Bears to a 9 to 3 record and their second straight bowl appearance. The Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year has energized the football program and helped to end Baylor's 16-year absence from bowl games.

Hailing from Copperas Cove, TX, Griffin put up spectacular numbers, completing 72 percent of his passes for 3,998 yards with 36 touchdown passes. He also led the Nation in passing efficiency with a rating of 192.3, which broke the single-season Football Bowl Series record. On top of his impressive

passing statistics, Griffin averaged 4.0 yards per carry for 644 yards and nine touchdowns on the ground. Although Griffin is only a junior, he holds 46 of Baylor's career offensive records including passing yards, passing touchdowns, and rushing touchdowns by a quarterback. While leading Baylor to one of its greatest seasons in history, he helped accomplish other important firsts for the program. After winning a combined 4 games in November during their first 15 seasons in the Big 12, Griffin guided the Bears to a perfect 4 to 0 record in the same month, with 3 of the wins against rivals Oklahoma, Texas, and Texas Tech. The late-season victory over Oklahoma marked the first time in school history that Baylor was able to defeat the mighty Sooners.

Robert Griffin's skills are not limited to the football field. In addition to being an All-American in the 400-meter hurdles, Griffin is also a model student. He completed his undergraduate work in 3 years with a 3.67 GPA, earning a bachelor's degree in political science, and is currently working on a master's degree in communications. Griffin also plans to earn a law degree. I applaud his commitment to excellence in both academics and athletics.

Today, I join with my colleagues, and Robert's friends and family, including his parents, Robert Jr. and Jacqueline Griffin, in celebrating this fine achievement. Robert Griffin joins a special class of Texas athletes who are also Heisman Trophy winners: TCU's Davey O'Brien, SMU's Doak Walker, Texas A&M's John David Crow, the University of Houston's Andre Ware, and the University of Texas's Earl Campbell and Ricky Williams.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO THE LONG FAMILY

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate the Long family for earning the distinction of 2011's Arkansas Farm Family of the Year.

This honor reflects Heath and Betsy Long's dedication to farming and the importance of agriculture as Arkansas's No. 1 industry. As owners of Long Planting Company, a rice, soybean, and wheat operation of more than 2,200 acres of land, the couple has taken advantage of technology and improved farming efficiency while expanding their farm.

Heath has devoted his life to farming, spending his childhood on the farm and earning a degree in agriculture from Arkansas State University. As a fourth-generation farmer, his commitment to the agriculture industry has helped his farm as well as other farms within the State, as he serves as the vice president of the Arkansas County Farm Bureau board of directors and a member of the Arkansas and USA rice councils.

The Arkansas Farm Bureau's program honors farm families across the