

Unthank displayed courage, bravery, and patriotism well beyond his age. While in the service, he was a member of the 509th Paratrooper Battalion. During their training, the unit practiced jumping out of airplanes that flew at heights of 250 to 300 feet. Squad sergeant Ernie Komula of Wix's battalion will never forget how surprised his men were when the planes wouldn't go lower than 2,000 feet once behind enemy lines. Despite the unfamiliar new height, Unthank and the rest of the men didn't think twice about jumping out of that plane and fighting for their beloved country.

After completing a 5-year stint in the Army, in which he received both a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart, he was honorably discharged in 1945. He attended the University of Kentucky for his undergraduate schooling. Then he went on to the University of Miami, where he obtained a J.D. in 1950. Once he had acquired the knowledge his parents had always hoped he would, Wix entered public service in what would turn out to be a prosperous and fulfilling professional life.

Judge Unthank worked as a practicing attorney in Harlan County for a short time before running for the public office of county judge. Throughout his political career, Judge Unthank used the slogan "You'll never be Unthankful with Unthank," and obviously the people never were because he never lost an election.

In the summer of 1980, President Jimmy Carter appointed G. Wix Unthank to the U.S. district court to serve as the presiding judge of the Eastern District of Kentucky. Eight years after his appointment, he assumed the honorable title of senior judge on the U.S. district court.

After many years of successfully running the courts in the Eastern District, Judge Unthank was honored with a portrait unveiling ceremony in Lexington, KY, in 1991 and Pikeville, KY, in 1992. At the ceremonies the judge was honored by his colleagues, family, and friends for the many achievements he had been blessed with throughout his lifetime up until that point. His portrait was hung in the courtrooms of both Lexington and Pikeville, which Judge Eugene E. Siler, Jr., who led the ceremonies, said that he believed were among the best courtrooms in the United States.

Judge Unthank was known for running a top-notch court system. He promoted collegiality amongst the judges and employees of the Eastern District. Under the leadership of Judge Unthank, they were more than just colleagues, they were a family. They enjoyed working together and seeing that the law was carried out equally and justly with each and every case.

Despite the judge's high-ranking senior status, he never shied away from work. He had an unheard-of workload for a senior judge. Day in and day out, he worked through social security cases, bankruptcy appeals, and retire-

ment disputes with hard work and dedication.

The words carved into the front of the Supreme Court Building in our Nation's Capital read "Equal Justice Under Law." That is a standard that we as a country hold up highly and a motto that those in the legal profession look to for guidance in every decision they make. Wix Unthank was no exception to this rule. He understands the importance of equal justice, and he demonstrated an unbelievable amount of integrity both in and out of the courtroom.

As I have said many times before, I am not in the business of speculation, so I would not testify to the character of Judge G. Wix Unthank if I was at all unsure of it. Therefore, with the utmost certainty, it is my pleasure today to stand and honor the Honorable Judge G. Wix Unthank for his tremendous contribution to his profession, his community, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and the United States of America, and I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in paying tribute to a brave veteran, a wise jurist, and a confirmed patriot of our great Nation.

CONGRATULATING STEPHANIE THACKER

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, today I wish to congratulate Stephanie Dawn Thacker, a native of Hamlin, WV, on her confirmation to the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals.

It is my privilege and my honor to speak on her behalf, and I am so proud she was confirmed. I would like to thank my colleague Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER for nominating such a qualified jurist.

Stephanie Thacker's impressive background and extensive list of accomplishments in both the public and private sectors make her an exceptional judge for the 4th Circuit. She is renowned in our State for her mastery of the law and of the courtroom, and I have no doubt that she will make a highly successful Federal judge.

Ms. Thacker has dedicated much of her career to fighting some of the worst offenses in our society. As a trial attorney, Deputy Chief of Litigation, and Principal Deputy Chief, she spent several years prosecuting cases on Child Exploitation and Obscenity at the Department of Justice. Her outstanding work and leadership earned her a number of honors at the Department of Justice, including four "Meritorious" Awards and two "Special Achievement" awards.

Her impressive performance in prosecuting the case of United States v. Dwight York earned her the Attorney General's "Distinguished Service" award, one of the Department's highest honors. She was also a recipient of the Assistant Attorney General's award for "Special Initiative" and "Outstanding Victim and Witness Service."

Prior to her service at the Department of Justice, Ms. Thacker worked

with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia, where she prosecuted a wide variety of criminal cases, including money laundering and fraud. While at the U.S. Attorney's Office, Ms. Thacker participated on the trial team prosecuting United States v. Bailey, the first case ever brought under the Violence Against Women Act.

Since 2006, Ms. Thacker has been a partner at the law firm of Guthrie & Thomas in Charleston, West Virginia. There, she has concentrated on cases involving product liability, environmental and toxic torts, complex commercial defense, and criminal defense.

Ms. Thacker was a model student in both her undergraduate and legal studies. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, magna cum laude, from Marshall University, and her J.D., Order of the Coif, from West Virginia University College of Law. While at West Virginia University she was a recipient of the Robert L. Griffin Memorial Scholarship and Editor of West Virginia Law Review's Coal Issue. She has also recently been named "Outstanding Female Attorney" by WVU Law's Women's Caucus.

Ms. Thacker's wide-ranging expertise in civil and criminal matters, her impressive track record in the courtroom as both a prosecutor and a defense attorney, and her outstanding academic accomplishments will make her a first-rate addition to the 4th Circuit. I am proud to call her a fellow West Virginian and I am pleased that she has finally been confirmed.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO KIKKAN RANDALL

• Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I wish to recognize Kikkan Randall, an Olympic athlete and World Champion Nordic skier from Anchorage, AK. On March 18, 2012, Kikkan was awarded the Joska crystal globe as the Cross Country World Cup sprint champion, recognizing her as the world's top sprint ski racer. She clinched the sprint title in Drammen, Norway, despite breaking a binding and skiing on one ski for part of the race. Nevertheless, Kikkan secured the sprint title with a World Cup record that included four podium finishes. This victory makes Kikkan the first American to win a World Cup Nordic skiing title since Bill Koch in 1982.

Kikkan made her Olympic debut in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Since then, she has represented the United States in the 2006 and 2010 Winter Olympics. In 2010 Kikkan finished eighth in the sprint competition, registering the best ever Olympic finish for a female American Nordic skier.

Kikkan has been a role model for thousands of young athletes through her extensive community involvement and encouragement of a healthy and active lifestyle. She has worked with young athletes and trained with her