

CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY GOLDEN JUBILEE OF HARLEM'S BELOVED SYLVIA'S RESTAURANT

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 31, 2012*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I stand to honor a venerable Harlem institution, Sylvia's Restaurant, on its 50th anniversary. Founded by the late Sylvia Woods, Sylvia's is nationally and internationally famous, yet its soul remains in Harlem.

On Wednesday, August 1, 2012, to kick off Sylvia's Restaurant's 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee, the Woods family salutes the Harlem community with a complimentary Southern-style sidewalk breakfast party featuring Cake Man Raven complete with a voter registration drive, children's programming, live entertainment, guest speakers, prize giveaways and plenty of "Dancing in the Streets." The celebration continues with The Golden Jubilee Parade, featuring the awesome Brooklyn Steppers, which begins at Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Harlem State Office Building African Village Plaza from 125th Street and 7th Avenue to Sylvia's Restaurant at 127th Street and Lenox Avenue.

I'd like to include in this CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, in celebration of this milestone occasion the obituary that was prepared in remembrance of Mrs. Sylvia Woods.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF SYLVIA WOODS,  
FEBRUARY 2, 1926–JULY 19, 2012

If ever there was a woman who defined strength, ambition and determination coupled with enough entrepreneurial spirit to uplift and inspire generations, it was Sylvia Pressley Woods, 'The Queen of Soul Food.' Encapsulating family traditions of love, unity, female empowerment and of course soul into her business ventures, she not only established an imprint with her famed restaurant Sylvia's, but the visionary blazed a trail for an entire community to emulate. After a blessed 86 years with us, Sylvia Woods departed this world and reunited with her late husband, Herbert Deward Woods, on July 19, 2012.

On February 2, 1926, Sylvia Woods was born to Van and Julia Pressley in Hemingway, South Carolina. Three days after Sylvia's birth, her father succumbed to chemical-weapons injuries; he worked to ensure financial stability. When Sylvia was three years old, her mother left her in the care of her grandmother and the greater community of Hemingway as she went to Brooklyn, New York in search of work and increased opportunities. It was the notion of strength and that sense of family togetherness which ultimately defined who Sylvia Woods became. Julia returned to Hemingway a short time later whereby she raised her children, Sylvia, Louise, whom she adopted, Christine (Tiny), and Janie (Cout), whom she also raised.

In an era where women were fighting for equal footing, Sylvia's grandmother already had a farm and instilled the value of ownership in Julia and later in Sylvia herself. Widowed after her husband was falsely accused of a robbery and hung, her grandmother later remarried and eventually fought to maintain control of the property after the second husband passed away. It was on that land, on that farm that Sylvia Woods absorbed an impeccable work ethic along with her cousins and other children from the com-

munity. It was under the hot sun that she picked beans every day after school and first fell in love with food. And it was there that Sylvia initially met her future husband at the tender age of 11 as she worked alongside him on the farm. You could say it was destiny.

Sylvia's mother Julia worked tirelessly as a laundress in New York and saved nearly every penny with the aim of purchasing the property adjacent to her own mother. That dream ultimately came to fruition. She returned to South Carolina when Sylvia was still an adolescent. Julia bought property next to the farm and had her own house constructed.

Together, as a family unit, they worked the farm and provided living examples of strong, independent, Black land owning women for young Sylvia to one day replicate.

In addition to their domestic work and maintenance of the farm, both Sylvia's mother and grandmother were midwives for Hemingway during their prime. Despite being unable to read or write, her grandmother was the community's only midwife at the time. This unyielding persistence to rise above adversity was a quality passed down to Sylvia, as was a sense of humility and gratitude for all of life's blessings. Sylvia herself once recounted that as a young child, she considered herself extremely lucky to be able to study by a lamp, for many in her neighborhood could not afford electricity. It was these humble beginnings that allowed Sylvia to continue to cherish each and every success and never waver in support of the less fortunate.

During her formative years in Hemingway, Sylvia observed a community that lived and worked for the benefit of all. It was commonplace to adopt someone's child if the need arose, or to help out in a person's home if necessary. Sylvia's mother and grandmother had both adopted children at various points in their lives. It was in this environment where Sylvia's dedication to hard work was fine tuned, as her mother made sure she stayed busy even on rainy days when the beans could not be picked. Learning to sew and mend, Sylvia started replacing buttons and repairing worn out clothing for herself and the family. But soon enough, that transitioned into a new creative outlet. Without the benefit of patterns to duplicate, or any formal training, Sylvia began making clothes—complete outfits—and tapping into the ingenuity that played a key role in all her life's work.

Whether she was expressing her innovative side, or working on the farm, Sylvia's childhood also centered on one other main factor: food. Watching her mother, grandmother, relatives and neighbors pour their hearts into the dishes they served, she understood that great food didn't just emerge; it required passion, love and soul. As different folks added their own ingredients and made their own specialties, Sylvia soon learned that cooking was a creative and artistic process unto itself. It was those recipes that were in turn handed down from generation to the next. And no matter what the occasion, it was food that brought everyone together.

When Sylvia was 16, her grandmother sent her to cosmetology school in Brooklyn in order to find work as a beautician. The youngest person to graduate in her class, Sylvia then returned to South Carolina. After a few years honing her beautician skills while still assisting her family at home, she made the difficult decision to return to New York. In addition to parting ways with relatives, Sylvia faced the heart-wrenching reality of saying goodbye to her beloved Herbert. Possessing the same sentiments as Sylvia, Herbert joined the Navy

shortly thereafter with the hope that he might one day sail to Brooklyn and reunite with his love. Although he never quite made it to Brooklyn through the Navy, the two married soon enough and moved to the village of Harlem.

On the tough and often unforgiving streets of New York, almost everyone was chasing after a dream. But it was the incomparable lessons of integrity, sacrifice, dedication and courage of her childhood that laid the foundation for Sylvia's eventual empire in Harlem and was an imprint for the nation. When the Woods first moved uptown, Herbert drove a cab to earn a living, while Sylvia worked a factory job on Long Island. Exhausted for her commute, she seized an opportunity to work as a waitress at Johnson's Luncheonette on Lenox Avenue. It was a decision that later proved invaluable.

When Sylvia first accepted this waitressing job, it was yet another daring move not only because she was inexperienced, but because she had never set foot inside a restaurant before. Growing up in the Deep South at a time when most restaurants barred Blacks and Black-owned restaurants were basically nonexistent, she had no knowledge of the complexities of the fast-paced industry. But Sylvia was a quick learner.

In 1962, when the owner of this luncheonette was leaving to focus on other ventures, he offered to sell Sylvia the establishment. After her initial shock, Sylvia realized the potential this venue could have for a community that was still yearning for a place to call home. Remaining true to the ideals of working as a family, Sylvia went to her mother who then mortgaged the family farm and allowed her daughter's concept to become a reality. On Aug. 1, 1962, Sylvia's opened its doors. It had 15 stools and six booths.

Having a business is no small feat, let alone a restaurant vying to survive during a period when many were forced to close their doors. It was Sylvia's faith and unbelievable relationship with Herbert that allowed her to overcome any obstacle big or small. From the fields of South Carolina where they looked after one another, through an enduring marriage that saw the birth of four children—Van, Bedelia, Kenneth and Crizette—the Woods had a bond that few will ever experience in their lives. Both were born in Hemingway, and both lost their fathers as babies. And in an added twist of fate, both Sylvia's mother and Herbert's mother were born on the same day, January 1, 1906.

During the 1960's, Harlem was an unpredictable and ever-changing neighborhood. As many restaurants struggled to remain open, Sylvia's found a niche with its southern cuisines of collard greens, peach pies, fried chicken, cornbread and other soul foods. But it was the warmth and love with which Sylvia welcomed patrons into the restaurant and that extra touch of care added into her dishes that won the hearts of the community. Her establishment was so well respected in fact, that during the riots of the '60s, as businesses were set ablaze, hers remained protected and intact.

"Sitting idle is not an option" is what Sylvia's mother used to say, and it's what Sylvia herself exemplified throughout her time on earth. As her restaurant grew in popularity, so did her efforts towards expansion. Sylvia's currently seats over 450 patrons, and the powerhouse behind it all had branched off into other business endeavors. She purchased the remaining stores on the restaurant's Lenox Avenue block, as well as several nearby brownstones. She packaged her own signature line of food products that found their way into grocery stores across America and remain of the few truly Black owned businesses in food production today.

And she somehow found time to publish two successful cookbooks.

In 2001, Sylvia said goodbye to her best friend, the love of her life, Herbert Woods. In his memory, the Woods family founded the Sylvia and Herbert Woods Scholarship Fund offering collegiate scholarships to Harlem and local residents. To date, the fund has dispersed 76 scholarships and will continue to live up to its mantra: "a higher level of education should not be a high-end luxury, but a right to all those who seek it".

After the death of her soul mate, Sylvia once again turned to her faith for renewed empowerment. Growing up in a strong Christian home, she came to know God as a young child. She was a firm believer in the notion that no matter what the adversity, God would see you through. It was a value and belief system she passed down to her children and grandchildren. Sylvia was a member of Abyssinian Baptist Church for many years, and later joined Grace Baptist Church as it was more convenient for her to attend there. She was instrumental in the construction of her home church, Jeremiah Methodist, in Hemingway.

In 2007, Sylvia received a Congressional honor acknowledging her immense contribution to American society. She appeared in numerous national and international media outlets and has been saluted by President Bill Clinton, New York Governor Pataki, New York Mayors Ed Koch, David Dinkins and Mike Bloomberg, the New York Stock Exchange, among others. She was also recognized by the NAACP and received numerous awards.

Sylvia's has proudly served Presidents—including the first African American President, Barack Obama—international dignitaries, celebrities, Harlem residents and tourists the world over. It is owned and operated by three generations of the Woods family that remain committed to the work ethic, devotion, and entrepreneurial spirit of its founder. 2012 marks the 50th anniversary of Sylvia's.

A relentless fighter and champion first for her family, community, and minority/female-owned businesses, Sylvia is now reunited with her mother, grandmother, husband Herbert, adopted sister Louise Thomas and half-brother McKinley Preston, all of whom have passed on. She is survived by her four children, Van (Brenda Woods) Bedelia, Kenneth (Sylvia Woods) and Crizette; one step-daughter, Linda Woods; 18 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; two special cousins, Christine Cameron and Janie Cooper; one sister-in-law, Evelyn Woods; a host of loving nieces, nephews, cousins and a nation that will forever be indebted to a woman who reminded us to never lose sight of the key ingredient for any success.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my colleagues join me in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the founding of this esteemed Harlem institution. May it continue its long run of excellence for another 50 years and more.

#### TRIBUTE TO RICHARD L. GRANT

### HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 31, 2012*

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Richard L. Grant, who recently retired as the Vice President and Region Manager of Boise White Paper Alabama Operations on May 31, 2012. Mr. Grant knows the value of

hard work, as well as the importance of loyalty to one's company.

Mr. Grant began his career after graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies at the University of Maine in 1977. After graduation, he began a long journey, ultimately taking him from the East coast to the West and finally down to Alabama.

He began work with Boise as the Pulp Mill Day Supervisor in 1987 in Wallula, Washington. He then became the Power and Utilities Superintendent from 1988 to 1989 at Smurfit Newsprint Corporation in Oregon. In 1989, Mr. Grant moved to the Alabama Operations, where he held a variety of positions from 1989 to 2008 which included: Operations Manager, Production Manager, Paper Machine Superintendent, Recycle General Superintendent, Utilities Superintendent and Region Manager of the Alabama Operations, before being promoted to Vice President in November of 2008.

In addition to being a leader in safety, Mr. Grant has made many outstanding and lasting contributions to Boise and his community. He has been a leader in the development of people's character, mentoring many of the key managers within the Boise Paper family. These contributions to the company will be greatly missed.

Rick has been a tremendous and positive force in his community and the Boise Paper Company. He has set a high standard of leadership that will be difficult to replace.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of South Alabama, I would like to extend a job well done, as well as our very best wishes to the Rick and his wife, Sissie, for all their future endeavors.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 31, 2012*

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 531 I inadvertently voted "aye" when I intended to vote "no" on the Fitzpatrick Amendment to H.R. 4078. I would like the record to reflect this error, and to reiterate my opposition to efforts to undermine the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. Sarbanes-Oxley has been an important bill that improves corporate transparency and helps to ensure confidence in our financial markets, and I continue to support this vital legislation.

#### HONORING REV. WILLIAM F. HARRELL

### HON. PAUL C. BROUN

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 31, 2012*

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a Southern Baptist minister in Georgia's Tenth Congressional District, Rev. William F. Harrell. After serving as Senior Pastor of Abilene Baptist Church for the past 31 years, Rev. Harrell, or Brother Bill, as he is lovingly referred to by his church congregation, is entering retirement.

Under his leadership, Abilene Baptist has grown to nearly 2,900 members, and the min-

istry includes a region-wide television program, entitled "Strength for Today." Its building stands as a stunning landmark, and the reputation of its members is a powerful testimony to the greatness of God. The church's success and strength is due, in large part, to Rev. Harrell's faithfulness and care in serving the community of the Central Savannah River Area and first and foremost, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has served a total of 39 years in ministry, holding a number of positions in the Augusta Baptist Association, Georgia Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

For this reason, and on the occasion of his retirement, it is my honor to acknowledge Rev. Bill Harrell, for his outstanding career and significant contributions to Christian ministry. Furthermore, I extend my sincere appreciation to a servant leader in whom I value his friendship and hold in the highest regard. Rev. Harrell is a man who is certain of his calling, consistent in his ministry, and committed to doing the work of the Lord.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I applaud the great work of Rev. William Harrell and congratulate him on the occasion of his retirement.

#### HONORING THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA MEN'S GOLF TEAM

### HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 31, 2012*

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the University of Alabama's men's golf team which placed runner up to the National Champion Team from the University of Texas, on June 3, 2011. The Crimson Tide's record of accomplishment this season is the best in the history of the University's golf program.

Although the Tide was behind all day, they fought hard to come back. Senior Hunter Hamrick, from Montgomery, was able to put points on the board for the Crimson Tide with a 6 and 5 win. Sophomore Bobby Wyatt, from Mobile, played a dramatic hole with a birdie chip on 18 winning his match 1 up. Sophomore Cory Whitsett tied the final match with a birdie on 17. And, on 18, Texas player Dylan Frittelli needed to sink a 20-foot-putt to beat the Crimson Tide in the final match.

With such an outstanding performance, the Alabama golf team completed their most successful season in the school's history by placing runner-up at the NCAA Championship. The team also won its third SEC Championship, the school's second regional title, as well as finished first in the stroke-play portion of the NCAA Championship over Texas by 10 shots.

The 2012 men's golf team members are Hunter Hamrick, Lee Knox, Tom Lovelady, Trey Mullinax III, Scott Strohmeyer, Justin Thomas, Cory Whitsett, and Bobby Wyatt.

The coaching staff consists of Head Coach Jay Seawell, Assistant Coach Scott Limbaugh, and Team Chaplain Stephan Bunn.

On behalf of the people of Alabama and my colleagues in the Alabama Delegation, I wish to extend personal congratulations to Coach Jay Seawell, the coaching staff, and the men of the University of Alabama Men's Golf Team for their tremendous accomplishment.