

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I too wish to say a few words about our departed colleague. The first thing to say is that we are sorry, first and foremost, to the family and also to the staff of Senator BYRD for their loss. The next thing to say is that it is a sad day for the Senate. Everybody who has been here for a while has a few ROBERT BYRD stories. A couple come to mind I thought I would share.

Along with Senator REID and Senator DODD, who were here on the floor earlier, Senator BYRD, in the early part of the decade, responded to my request to come down to the University of Louisville, my alma mater, to speak to the students and to a broader audience. At his age and particularly given the fact that I was a member of the opposition party, there was, frankly, no particular reason for him to do that. But he did and made an extraordinary impression on the students and inconvenienced himself on my behalf, which I always appreciated.

My second—and really my favorite—recollection of Senator BYRD, I found myself a few years ago in a curious position, at variance with virtually everybody on my side of the aisle. I had reflexively, as I think many Members had, responded negatively to a decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in the late 1980s essentially holding that flag burning was a permissible first amendment expression of political speech. The first time that amendment came before the Senate, I voted for it. Then I began to have some pangs of discomfort about my position. Having spent a good portion of my political career focusing on political speech and the first amendment, I, frankly, decided I was wrong and in subsequent votes have opposed it.

A few years ago, it became clear it was going to be defeated in the Senate by the narrowest of margins. I remembered that Senator BYRD was always carrying around a Constitution in his pocket and had a feeling that upon reflection, he might reach the same conclusion I did. So I lobbied Senator BYRD. I thought initially it would be a futile act, but he reexamined his position. As a result, he too changed his position, and as it turns out, there was not a vote to spare the last time the Senate considered whether it would be appropriate to amend the first amendment for the first time in the history of the country to kind of carve a niche out of it to make it possible to punish an act we all find despicable. But, nevertheless, the most unfortunate of

speech is probably what the first amendment was all about initially. So Senator BYRD did change his position. There was not a vote to spare, and the amendment was defeated. And from my point of view, the first amendment was saved on that important occasion.

We will all remember Senator BYRD for a variety of different things. As the majority leader pointed out, he was a unique individual in so many different ways. Those are two of my favorite stories about ROBERT BYRD.

More than anyone else in any of our lifetimes, ROBERT BYRD embodied the Senate. He not only wrote the book on it, he was a living repository of its rules, its customs, and its prerogatives. So it would be a mistake to think that Senator BYRD became synonymous with the Senate simply because he served in it longer than anybody else. Rather, it was a fitting coincidence that a man who cherished and knew this place so well would become its longest serving Member.

Yet it is probably true that he will be remembered above all for his longevity.

Everyone seems to have a different way of communicating just how long a time he spent here. For me, it is enough to note that ROBERT BYRD had already spent nearly 20 years serving in elected office in West Virginia and in the House of Representatives before he was elected to the U.S. Senate during the Eisenhower administration.

And over the years, he would walk the floor with 4 future Presidents, 4 of the 12 he would serve alongside in a 57-year career in Congress. I won't enumerate all the legislative records Senator BYRD held, but I would venture to say that the figure that probably made him proudest of all was the nearly 70 years of marriage he spent with a coal miner's daughter named Erma.

If he was synonymous with the Senate, he was no less synonymous with West Virginia. Here is how popular ROBERT BYRD was in his home State: In the year ROBERT BYRD was first elected to the U.S. Senate, 1958, he won with 59 percent of the vote, a margin that most people around here would consider a landslide. In a record 9 Senate elections, it was the smallest margin of victory he would ever get.

Members will offer tributes of their own in the coming days.

I will close with this. Last year, in becoming the longest serving Member of Congress in history, Senator BYRD surpassed another legendary figure, Carl Hayden of Arizona. Hayden was known to many as the "silent Senator," a phrase few would use to describe Senator BYRD.

But what the two men shared was a devotion to the United States and, in particular, to the legislative branch of our Government, which the founders envisioned and established as coequal with the other two.

A few years ago, Senator BYRD's official portrait was unveiled at an event in the Old Senate Chamber. And I

think that portrait pretty well sums up the image Senator BYRD wanted to leave of himself. It is the image of a dignified man, in the classical mold, supported by three things: the Bible, the U.S. Constitution, and his wife. A lot of people looked at Senator BYRD's record-long tenure in Congress, his immense knowledge of poetry, history, and the Senate, and wondered where he got the strength. With this painting, he gave us the answer. He showed us the anchors.

As I noted at that ceremony, Senator BYRD once wrote that if the question was whether to be loved or respected, he always chose to be respected. Yet his real accomplishment is that, in the end, he managed to be both.

So I join my colleagues, my fellow Americans, the people of West Virginia, and the Byrd family today in remembering our colleague. We will surely miss him.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, on this day, West Virginia has lost probably its most prominent son and the Senate has lost probably its most able statesman. For myself, I have lost an admired colleague and a treasured friend. More than nine decades of a remarkable life and five decades as an accomplished public servant in the Senate only serve as one form of proof that ROBERT C. BYRD was and always will be an icon, particularly in his own State. A man of great character, faith, intellect, who rose to the heights of power, yet never forgot where he came from, his story holds such a profoundly significant place in both West Virginia and American history. But it was in the coalfields of southern West Virginia where a young ROBERT C. BYRD first gained the skills, the moral character, the toughness, and the shrewdness that would make him a truly great man.

After his mother passed away, he was raised by his aunt and uncle, a coalminer, he movingly called "the most remarkable man I have ever been privileged to know." From them Senator BYRD learned early in life what it meant to be loyal, to have a ferocious work ethic, really almost beyond imagination, and possess a deep faith in God. And it was these values—these innately West Virginia values, I argue—that guided his every action and made him such a unique and strong fighter for our State and who got such joy in doing that fight.

He was proud of West Virginia. He was proud of his ideals. He was proud of the service he could render to the people from whom he came. He believed with all of his heart that our breathtaking mountains, our rivers, and our deep valleys, and especially our well-rooted people, who face adversity always and face it with strength and courage, make our State a place like quite none other in the world.

He loved the music of the mountains and played his fiddle, in fact, very brilliantly. He was a master violin player. He loved to quote the ancients, lending depth to his analysis and observations, with knowledge of history and philosophy to rival any professor. Just as easily as he could quote Cicero from memory, he could sing every verse of "Amazing Grace" from memory, too, and often did.

Everything about Senator BYRD was a testament to his faith in God. This man, who wrote and debated countless laws, lived with 10 clear Commandments in his heart. His aunt and uncle kept the King James Bible in their home and instilled in him an enduring reverence for God. He always remembered that as important as the Senate and our constitutional government might be, there was always a higher law that took precedence.

He started his career humbly by any definition—as a butcher, as a welder, other things too—and then campaigned by playing his foot-stomping music, the fiddle, to get elected to the West Virginia Legislature—that is how he did it—the very same body that decades later would deem him the "West Virginian of the 20th Century."

It was at Mark Twain High School where a lifetime of love first began for ROBERT C. BYRD and his future wife, Erma Ora James. Calling her the "wind beneath this BYRD's wings," as he put it, Senator BYRD was never shy to tell you that Erma—a beloved coal miner's daughter herself—was the reason he reached all of his goals. He believed that with all of his heart. So from the fiddle-playing young man to a history-making American icon, she loved and supported him every step of the way until her passing in 2006.

I know and I observed maybe earlier than some that Senator BYRD lost just a bit when Erma died. Watching him hurting was painful. His wife died from the same disease my mother died from; that is, Alzheimer's, and we talked about it, especially a few years ago when he was talking more frequently. I always felt bad that I could not give him comfort and that I could not say something to him that would relinquish his pain, which was evident and obvious—very obvious in privacy. But I could not do that because you cannot do that for diseases like that one. There were not words to describe the difficulty such a devastating loss can bring, and I commend my friend for continuing on so strongly—as he did—for so long.

Erma was his soulmate, his best friend and trusted counselor. Their marriage was something to behold. My wife Sharon and I loved watching them together. He became a different person. They radiated an extraordinary faith in God, in each other, and in the beautiful family they built together, which in the end was what he loved the most. Indeed, it was the time ROBERT C. BYRD spent with Erma; their daughters, Mona and Marjorie, their husbands, and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren that brought sheer

joy—pure, unadulterated—to his life. So with sadness in my heart, I also have joy at the thought of my friend united with his precious Erma, with his dear grandson he lost at a young age. And we all know, those of us who have been here for several years, the agony he went through at the death of that young man, setting up a shrine in his office. It affected him deeply. It was interesting that a man who could be so oriented toward policy, and sometimes almost remote from personal matters, as a professional self-definition, could be so utterly moved by sadness in his own life and I think in the lives of others.

It was in the Halls of the U.S. Senate where ROBERT C. BYRD became known as the "Soul of the Senate," a fierce defender of the Constitution, a respected historian, and an absolutely fearless legislator. He held, as has been said many times before, more leadership posts than any other Senator, cast more votes than any other Senator, and served longer than any other Senator. And one could go on in many ways in that theme. He literally wrote the authoritative book on the rules and procedures of the Senate. He taught all of us who were freshmen in this body about that in classes which he would conduct standing in the well of the Senate. He loved and he revered this institution. Everybody says that. It is true.

Some people pass through this institution. They experience this institution. He lived this institution. Yet, still, his entire career was fundamentally an act of commitment to the State of West Virginia and its people—a day-in and day-out effort to do the best he possibly could for the people of the Mountain State; always put upon, often looked down upon, even disdained by others who did not understand where they came from, what their lives were like, and, for example, what it was like to be a coal miner. People do not understand West Virginia well. Most people do not go there. Senator BYRD sprung from West Virginia and, yes, was an intensely devoted statesman.

He put himself through law school while also serving in Congress. I know a few others have done that, but I just sort of deny that. I think it is amazing that Senator BYRD did that; therefore, any others who did it do not get my attention.

He understood that people with the fortitude to ask questions and to debate and to dissent one from another makes America stronger. He had that courage himself, standing up time and time again to defend the ideals upon which our Nation was founded. And often those ideas were very different from those of others. No matter with Senator BYRD; he always spoke for what he felt was correct.

As the minority leader has pointed out, the Senator always had the Constitution in his pocket, close to his heart. And he outlasted Presidents and Supreme Court Justices. He served with an absolute insistence on the

equality of the three branches of government as envisioned by our Founding Fathers, and he, therefore, helped us as a body be more than our separate parts. He spread the words of our Constitution to young children and his colleagues alike. His patriotism was strong and confident, infusing his every action with deep devotion for our Nation and its people.

A Senator from a State that has sent legions of sons and daughters to war—out of courage, out of love of country, sometimes just out of a need to get work—he supported our troops whether he agreed with their cause or not, fought for our veterans, and worked hard to make sure those who served our country got the respect, the support, the supplies they needed and they deserved.

He also earned the loyalty of West Virginians with a record of support for education and economic opportunity that few Senators, at any time, in any State, in my judgment, could ever match. To him, every school building or education grant was a chance for a better life for some West Virginia child or maybe quite a lot of children. He cared about that, and he helped that become true.

Every overpass, every road represented an opportunity for a more dynamic economy for our cities and towns, which might be taken casually in some places but not in West Virginia because only 4 percent of our land is flat, and unless there is a road or a bridge, you cannot build anything anywhere or virtually do anything anywhere. Every business park or government office meant the possibility of a better job for West Virginians trying to raise their families—people he fought for all his life.

Senator BYRD also believed health care is one of the most important ways to strengthen a community, and his support for medical research resulted in breakthrough medical opportunities. He spread this research all across West Virginia, to West Virginia University, to Marshall University, to institutions of all kinds. He believed in medical research and did more than most of our colleagues even know.

So in a State with rugged terrain, full of people like the family who raised him, doing their best for their family, for their country, for their God, ROBERT C. BYRD decided that somebody needed to do the best for them, and he did so each and every day of his life.

To me, he was a perfect colleague and a reliable friend, a walking example of the kind of America I believe in, and a living testament to the values that made West Virginia my own home forever. It has been my greatest privilege to serve with ROBERT C. BYRD in the U.S. Senate. I respected him and I fought side-by-side with him for causes we both believed in, and obviously I am profoundly saddened that he is gone.

So in closing, Mr. President, I think he leaves a void that probably cannot

be filled. But I am lifted by the knowledge of his deep and abiding faith and that he is in the hands of the One who inspired these words in "Amazing Grace:

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

I think that gives all of us some comfort. It certainly does me.

So peace and Godspeed, Senator BYRD, and peace to your family, your loyal staff, and to the loving people of West Virginia, who held you high for so long and will continue to do so.

I thank the Chair and yield my time.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I see my friend from Tennessee. I presume we are kind of going back and forth. The Senator is in leadership. I do not want—

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I would like to leave by 3, but I will be glad to defer to the Senator from Connecticut if he would like to go ahead.

Mr. DODD. I thank my colleague. I will not be long.

Mr. President, are we in morning business? Is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

REMEMBERING SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, let me begin by expressing my deep sorrow and my condolences to ROBERT C. BYRD's family. And that family includes, obviously, not only his direct, immediate family but obviously the literally legions of people who worked for ROBERT C. BYRD—worked with him in both the House of Representatives and this body for the more than five decades he served in the U.S. Congress.

I suspect I am one of a handful of people left who remember the day when I was 7 years old, in the gallery of the House of Representatives, watching my father be sworn in as a new Congressman, watching my father and a young 34-year-old West Virginian named ROBERT C. BYRD to be sworn in as a Member of the House on January 3, 1953. Seven years later, at the age of 14, I was in the gallery of this Chamber when I watched my father and his great friend be sworn in together on January 3, 1959, as Members of the Senate. Two years later, as a 16-year-old

sitting on the very steps where these young pages sit today, in the summer of 1961, I worked with ROBERT C. BYRD. In fact, with his departure and his death, he is now the last remaining Member of the Senate who was there that day when I first arrived as a page in the summer of 1961 when all these chairs were filled by 100 Senators. For the last 25 years, I have sat next to him at this very seat to be the recipient of his good counsel, his advice, his humor, his contributions in so many ways to me, as he was to so many others with whom he served during his tenure in the Congress.

So this is a very poignant day, one that begins, in a sense, a sense of book-marks to me and a sense of public life. It won't be the same for the remaining 6 or 7 months of my tenure here to not have this wonderful human being, ROBERT C. BYRD, as my seatmate in the Senate.

So I rise today to mark the passing and to celebrate the prolific life of ROBERT C. BYRD of West Virginia. As I have said to his family and to his staff, and, of course, to the people of West Virginia, for whom he has been such a champion throughout his public life, ROBERT BYRD loved three things above all else during the 30 years we spent together in this Chamber. He loved his wife Erma, he loved the State of West Virginia, and he loved deeply the Senate. I might say that each in turn loved him back.

Our sadness at his passing is tempered by our joy that he now joins his beloved Erma. What a love story it was. They met in grade school. They married in 1937, well before I was even born. They spent nearly 70 years on an incredible journey together, and even after passing a few years ago, his love for her was apparent in everything he did.

In 1946, when ROBERT BYRD first ran for office, West Virginia ranked at the bottom in nearly every economic indicator you could possibly think of. It was a bleak landscape pockmarked by coal fields and populated by hard-working people from hardscrabble back-grounds and communities struggling to make ends meet.

Then a young grocer from the town of Sophia arrived on the scene, asking his neighbors in those communities around Sophia for their votes in his race for the West Virginia House of Delegates. As the Washington Post noted in its obituary this morning, ROBERT C. BYRD met nearly every person—I would suspect every person—in his district, campaigning alone, with no one else, talking about the issues he cared about and those that would affect and did affect the people he wanted to represent; and when all else failed, wowing potential voters with his fiddle prowess.

He won that election, as he would every single election—every single election for which he ever ran. The people of West Virginia never could say no to ROBERT C. BYRD, and he could never

say no to them. As a State legislator, a Congressman, and as a Senator, ROBERT C. BYRD fought for West Virginians, and our Nation, I might add, at every single turn.

If you travel the State of West Virginia today, you will see his name on schools and bridges and highway signs. You will perceive his influence when you see the government buildings and research laboratories he brought to West Virginia—investments that contributed both to the State and to our national economy and to our Nation. But don't just look for his name on the sides of buildings or overpasses. Listen for it in the appreciative words of his constituents, his extended family, and of a grateful nation for his service.

No State has ever had such a deep appreciation for the Senate Appropriations Committee because no State has ever had such an effective appropriator and fighter. ROBERT C. BYRD came to Congress with my father, as I pointed out, in January of 1953, and they both arrived on the same day as they had in the House, on January 3 of 1959. In the summer of 1961, I mentioned I was a Senate page sitting on the Senate floor. I still remember the eloquent speeches of the freshman Senator from West Virginia.

It is incredible to imagine that he was once a freshman Senator. Even then, he had the same gentlemanly manner; he was kind to pages, as I recall, the same knack for triumphant oratory, and the same respect for the rules and traditions of the Senate. But he soon became a fixture and a mentor to new Senators as well. I expect that over the next few days many Senators will take this floor with a Constitution in their pockets, as I do, that they received from ROBERT C. BYRD. Here is my tattered and rather worn copy signed by ROBERT C. BYRD: "To my friend, Chris Dodd, with great personal esteem. Sincerely, Robert C. Byrd." I have carried this with me every day of my life for the last quarter of a century, given to me by my colleague in this Chamber, along, I might add, with a stern but kind lecture about Senate protocol. I have mine right here, as I said. It is a tattered and withered copy, after this many years.

For the past quarter of a century I have occupied some prime real estate on the floor of the Senate. This desk right next to me today, adorned with these flowers and this black cape, marks the seat ROBERT C. BYRD sat in for many years. As have all of us, I have been awed by his deep knowledge of this institution and his deeper commitment to preserving its place in our legislative system.

So, in many ways, ROBERT BYRD's story is one of constancy, of preservation, and of tradition. You could define his life by longevity, I suppose—his 69 years of marriage, his 52 years of service in the Senate, his 64 years of public service to the people of West Virginia. But he wouldn't have wanted it that way. This country has changed over