

whom the Scriptures name "the least of these" and was a constant thorn in the side of those who wished to take advantage of them. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy recognized Buddy's work for social justice and racial reconciliation by inviting him to a meeting of 240 attorneys that later became the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law—the group credited with providing official legal support to those civil rights activists and organizations challenging segregation and racial discrimination across the country. In 1996, Buddy was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award for his decades-long participation with this select group.

Buddy demonstrated the same tenacity and loyalty towards his family that he exhibited in every other aspect of his life. Married to his wife Lois for over 50 years, Buddy exemplified an honest and loving husband, caring for his wife throughout the years of her illness. Their children, Ellen and Carol, were blessed to have a father who wanted nothing more than to love them and watch them grow up in an Alabama that was better than the one in which he grew up.

I am proud, Mr. Speaker, today to honor Jerome "Buddy" Cooper for his tremendous accomplishments. But, Mr. Speaker, I do so with the bittersweet knowledge that Alabama will be lesser tomorrow for his passing.

#### TRIBUTE TO JOHN STRAUSS'S LIFE AND MILITARY SERVICE

#### HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2003*

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I recently had the privilege of meeting with John Strauss, one of North Dakota's distinguished World War II veterans at the North Dakota Veterans Home. John's unit, the 164th Infantry Battalion, saw more than 600 days of fierce combat in the South Pacific. For his heroism, John was awarded a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart.

I would like to include in the RECORD an article from the Ransom County Gazette in North Dakota about John's life and military service.

[From the Ransom County Gazette]

NDVH RESIDENT, JOHN STRAUSS TELLS OF  
HIS WORLD WAR II EXPERIENCES

(By Janet Hansen)

John Strauss, a resident of the North Dakota Veterans Home (NDVH), Lisbon, was a member of the U.S. Army's 164th Infantry Battalion which spent three years in the South Pacific during World War II. Strauss, who recently celebrated his 90th birthday, can still recall clearly the details of that time in America's history.

Strauss was born on September 5, 1913. He was next to the youngest in a family of six boys and two girls. He and his younger sister, Mary Bartholomay of Sheldon, are the last two surviving siblings. He was raised on a farm near Harvey, North Dakota and attended the Whitby School, a one-room country school located just a half mile from the Strauss farmstead. He received his high school education at Harvey High School, from which he graduated in 1932.

Following his graduation from high school, Strauss worked at various farm and construction jobs. He spent some time working in the Sheldon area on the Muscha and

Stansbury farms. He milked cows as well as caring for a herd of Angus beef cattle. His other jobs included working for a plumbing and heating business, doing construction and cement work, and spending ten months as a maintenance man at the hospital in Harvey.

In January of 1941 Strauss joined the National Guard. "I was 27 years old when I joined the guard," commented Strauss. "Most of the guys signing up were only 18. We organized our own company. Up to that time, Harvey did not have a Guard unit of its own, although there were several units in surrounding towns. Since there was a need for an anti-tank company, that is what our unit became."

Shortly after Harvey's National Guard unit was organized, its members were shipped to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, where they underwent training for ten months. Then came the attack on Pearl Harbor, which pushed the United States into World War II and the National Guard into active duty.

"It wasn't long after the attack on Pearl Harbor that we were loaded on a troop train for San Francisco. We expected to get sent overseas immediately, but we were instead sent up north to guard installations such as roads and bridges which were thought to be vulnerable to attack by the Japanese.

In March of 1942 Strauss and his fellow guardsmen were loaded onto an old luxury liner, the President Coolidge, for their long trip to Melbourne, Australia. "The ship was nice," recalls Strauss. "It still had a swimming pool and a continental lounge with a grand piano. I enjoyed sitting around listening to various soldiers playing boogie-woogie music on that piano. But the ship was very crowded! There were many other soldiers besides our battalion on board. I believe there were about 5,000 of us in all. The ship had two-room apartments with a bath between. Each had been made to house a husband and wife. The single compartments designed for one person were each crammed with about a dozen soldiers in bunk beds."

Strauss does not complain about the accommodations. He says he was happy with two decent meals a day. He spent much of his time on the deck of the large ship. "I loved it on the water," he said. "I didn't get seasick. I liked to stand on deck and watch the waves roll by."

After a long ocean voyage, the ship finally reached Melbourne. "We had to unload all our gear and equipment from that ship onto three small Dutch ships which were waiting for us in the harbor," said Strauss. "They were old wooden vessels with crews from the Indonesian island of Java. The crew members were dirty and used to eating tired old mutton for meat. It didn't look or smell fit to eat, and tasted as bad as it looked, but I managed to eat enough to get by."

The old Dutch ships took the soldiers to New Caledonia, a French held island in the South Pacific east of Australia. It was believed that that island might be one of the next Japanese targets. The troops immediately set about fortifying the beach by digging in gun emplacements. The soldiers lived in tents. It was hot and humid during the day but cooled off at night. The Japanese attack which had been expected did not come. Strauss recalls hearing that some troops encountered problems with the Communist French but it didn't affect those with whom he was encamped on the shoreline."

From New Caledonia, Strauss and his fellow soldiers were sent to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. "We only found out a day in advance that we were to be sent there," Strauss said. "We arrived there just after daylight. We had to unload our own ships with small boats that ferried the cargo from the large ship to shore. We had only a day in

which to complete the job because the ships wanted to leave the harbor while it was still daylight. There was too much danger from Japanese air strikes to chance staying there at night."

Strauss said that the first night at Guadalcanal was the most frightening time which he experienced during his entire tour of duty. "We sat on the beach," he said. "There was a lot of confusion with people milling around. There were air raids going on and we were pretty scared because of the lack of protection. In the evening they lined us up in formation and told us to march. I did not know where we were going. I just followed the guy in front of me. Suddenly all hell broke loose! There were Japanese ships in the bay and they were attacking Guadalcanal. The attack from air and sea lasted until morning. The area was all lit up by the explosions. We got initiated fast! We felt completely helpless." "The main target of the attack was the airbase at Henderson Field. The Japanese had originally built the airstrips and the United States had taken control of the base. The Japanese wanted it back. Around 10,000 Japanese troops landed on the island. They were on the opposite end of the island from where we had landed. The Japanese would come in swarms at night but we were safer on our side of the island than we would have been if we had landed on the other side."

Strauss explained that his battalion's first objective was to entrench their 37 millimeter guns along the beach. "We were sent in to help the Marines at Guadalcanal," he said. "We served under General Vandegrift, Commander of the 1st Marine Division.

As a result of their service under the Marines at Guadalcanal, Strauss and his fellow members of the 164th infantry were each awarded the Presidential Unit Citation, which is given by the commander of the regiment. "To my knowledge we were the only army outfit in the world to get a citation from the Marines," said Strauss.

Strauss states that his main job was to guard the beach area. He manned a 37 millimeter gun entrenched in the sand. "I was glad to stay there instead of going farther onto the island," he said. "We stayed there for six months. There were a few small battles, but we were mostly mopping up."

"The Marines left in January and we followed in March," said Strauss. He explains that by the time they left Guadalcanal most of the men in his outfit had dysentery and/or malaria.

"Most of us were sent to the Fiji Islands for some R & R (rest and relaxation) time," related Strauss. Some members of his division enjoyed their vacation, but Strauss spent five months in the hospital because of a tropical ulcer on his leg. The ulcer started as a sand fly bite and became infected by his boot rubbing on it. After two and a half months with no results in the treatment of the ulcer, a doctor tried grafting some skin over the ulcerated area. After that it finally began to heal and he was released from the hospital.

"I was out of the hospital for one day," said Strauss, "and I came down with malaria." I spent another two and a half months in the hospital recuperating." By the time Strauss got out of the hospital his company's R & R time was over and it was time to train once again.

"We were in Fiji for a total of nine months," said Strauss. "From there we were shipped to Bougainville Island, where we stayed for the next year. Again, we were sent there to do some mopping up. We saw action, but it was usually small attacks. However I actually saw more action there than I had previously."

Strauss explained that he served as sergeant of a flame thrower platoon. "I had 26

men under me," he said. "Of those 26, 13 lost their lives during our stay on Bougainville Island. Our job was to dig machine gun nests out of the big banyon tree roots where the Japanese had placed them. It was my job to lay down in a root trench and receive the flame throwers from one of my men. I would then drop the flame thrower down a hole which looked like a gopher hole to try to destroy the machine guns." Strauss would then have to scramble out of the hole as quickly as possible. We continued that dangerous mission for seven days but were unable to burn the machine gun nests out."

He explains that the flame throwing itself was not the hard part of the mission. The difficult part was getting back to their line without being hit by enemy fire.

He goes on to explain that on one of his flame throwing missions he received a head wound which was believed to have been from shrapnel but which he describes as "just a nick or scratch." For that wound he received a Purple Heart which he proudly displays with his other medals. He also received a Bronze Star for meritorious service while under the call of duty.

From Bougainville the 164th Infantry was shipped to the Philippines. Shortly after arriving there, Strauss came down with a strange skin disease. He received orders to go to the medics and, as a result, ended up in the hospital again. After a couple weeks he was shipped back to the United States, since his skin condition seemed to be getting worse instead of better. He was hospitalized at Harmon General Hospital in Longview, Texas for a few months and then was sent home for a month. An army doctor in Texas diagnosed his skin condition, which had been previously thought to be 'jungle rot,' as dermatitis. Once the correct diagnosis was made and proper treatment provided, his skin cleared up. He told his doctor that he was afraid of getting it back when he went back to the Philippines, since it seemed to be the dirty conditions in which the soldiers were forced to live that caused it. The doctor replied that he did not have to be afraid of that happening because he was sending him home instead.

In June of 1945 Strauss was sent to Fort Snelling where papers were filled out for his discharge. He was then sent back to his home town of Harvey.

After his discharge Strauss went back to work at the plumbing and heating business where he had been formerly employed. He was sent to a private machine shop in Wahpeton for six months of training, on a lathe. He later spent some time working on a ranch in the Bowman area. He then answered an ad for a maintenance worker at the Harvey hospital and was hired. He eventually became head of maintenance there and worked there for six years.

He left that position in 1969 and went to work for the Bureau of Reclamation with a crew that was working on the McClusky Dam. He worked at the commissary at the Fortuna Air Force Base at Crosby for a while and then worked in Housing and Maintenance at the same base for a couple years.

Strauss retired in 1975, at 62 years of age, and moved into an apartment in Harvey. He continued to do odd jobs in the Harvey area.

When his health began to fail in 1998 Strauss moved to the North Dakota Veterans Home. "I always had it in mind that I wanted to live here some day," said Strauss. "I had visited the home a few times and thought it was a nice place. I have never been sorry for a minute that I came here."

Strauss celebrated his 90th birthday with cake and ice cream treats at the NDVH in September. His nephew, David Strauss, Valley City, planned a big party for him.

Strauss's sister Mary and several nephews and nieces were on hand to help him celebrate.

Outside of some arthritis and a few heart problems Strauss said he is doing fine. He explained that he got the flu last spring and was sick for several months. However, once he recuperated from that bout he has been back to his old self. "They are so good to me here," he said. "Anything you need, you get. The staff people are always smiling. I couldn't have found a better home anywhere."

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#### RECOGNIZING JIM AYERS

#### HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2003*

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an incredible citizen of the 7th district of Tennessee.

Jim Ayers is the founder of the Ayers Foundation; since the fall of 2000, the Ayers Foundation has given as much as \$4,000 a year in scholarships to every high school graduate from Decatur County who agrees to go to college or technical school. Yes, I said every high school graduate.

Jim is a success in the health care, banking, real estate businesses to name a few—however, he has never forgotten his native Decatur County. Every community would be fortunate to have a Jim Ayers.

It took Mr. Ayers about eight years to put together an endowment and a staff of counselors to work with the students of Riverside High School and Scotts Hill High School. The benefits that the students of these schools have received is evidence that Jim Ayers is doing a great thing for our young people.

Only 25 percent of Riverside graduates pursued some form of postsecondary education before the scholarships were available. But the participation rate immediately shot up to 75 percent when the Ayers Foundation began. And now 90 percent of students at this school are able to further their education beyond high school.

He not only provides financial assistance to the aspiring high school seniors, he has a direct talk with the students—telling them "if anyone is going to take care of them, it's got to be themselves."

It is with great appreciation that I honor Mr. Jim Ayers for his service to community and for his commitment to education.

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#### REMEMBERING FEDERAL JUDGE JOHN HANNAH

#### HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2003*

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to mourn the sudden passing of Federal Judge John H. Hannah, Jr., chief judge for the U.S. Eastern District of Texas, who died this past Thursday while attending a judicial conference in Florida. John was 64.

Judge Hannah was an esteemed and respected jurist and public servant who served the State of Texas and his fellow citizens with

distinction as an attorney, legislator, State official and finally U.S. Federal judge. His untimely death is being mourned by numerous friends and supporters and his passing leaves a tremendous void in the U.S. Eastern District of Texas.

President Bill Clinton appointed John to the Federal bench in 1994, and he had been chief judge for the Eastern District since 2001. Governor Ann Richards named him the Texas Secretary of State in January 1991 on the day she was inaugurated, and one of his projects was working on passage of a new ethics law for State officials.

John was elected to the Texas Legislature in 1966, representing Angelina, Trinity, San Jacinto and Polk counties for three terms. He attended South Texas College of Law while serving as a State lawmaker. He then served as district attorney for Angelina County from 1973 to 1975 and served as legal counsel for the public interest group, Common Cause. In 1977 President Jimmy Carter appointed him U.S. attorney for the Eastern District, a position he held until 1981.

John also served in the U.S. Navy for 4 years. He grew up in Diboll, graduated from Sam Houston State University and was honored as a Distinguished Alumnus in 1993.

Judge Hannah's integrity and commitment to ethics are evident in his distinguished record of public service and in his many significant accomplishments on behalf of Texans. He was an accomplished jurist and statesman whose word was his bond and whose commitment to rendering fair decisions was well-known and highly respected. He leaves a powerful legacy for those in public service and in the practice of law to emulate.

John's wife, U.S. Magistrate Judith Guthrie of Tyler, is a respected jurist in her own right and was with him at the time of his death. Our hearts go out to her and to his father, John Hannah Sr.; son, John Hannah III; brother, James Hannah; and granddaughter, Rebecca. Their loss, though certainly more personal, is shared by all those who knew and admired Judge Hannah.

Mr. Speaker, as the House adjourns for business this year, let us do so by recognizing the remarkable contributions of this dedicated public servant, outstanding Texan and great American to whom we pay tribute and pay our last respects today—Judge John Hannah, Jr. May God bless his family in their time of sorrow.

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#### RECOGNIZING DR. JAMES E. OWEN, AN EDUCATOR HIS ENTIRE LIFE

#### HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2003*

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. James E. Owen whose professional education career has spanned 40 years.

Dr. Owen received his education at Jacksonville State Teachers College, the University of Alabama and Auburn University and began teaching in the Talladega (Alabama) City School System in 1949. His career was briefly interrupted while Dr. Owen was on active duty with the United States Army during the Korean Conflict. It was during his service at Camp