

East. Big enough for the big boys of college athletics. Big enough to have something Big Brother in Lexington lacks: membership in what will be the best basketball conference going.

This is a league big enough to find on every map. Trips to Hattiesburg, Birmingham and Greenville are out. Philadelphia, Washington and the Big Apple are in.

It's big enough to find every March. As recently as 1994, Louisville was playing in the Metro Conference Tournament in the Mississippi Coast Coliseum in Biloxi. Now it has signed on to play its league tourney on the most famous hardwood in the world at Madison Square Garden.

It's big enough to keep a football coach happy. U of L lost the two best it ever had—Howard Schnellenberger and John L. Smith—because of conference affiliation. Today Petrino, a star-in-the-making, believes he has everything he needs to chase what had been unattainable: a national championship.

Schnellenberger, Denny Crum and Bill Olsen vaulted Louisville athletics forward dramatically in the 1980s and early '90s. That shouldn't be forgotten today when measuring how far the Cards have come. But by the time Jurich arrived, the school's isolationist athletic stance had outlived its usefulness.

As the conference landscape had begun to change, U of L hadn't changed with it. Hogging TV and postseason revenue and pipe-dreaming of football independent status wasn't helping make the Cards an attractive modern program. In fact, it nearly cost them membership in C-USA at a time when, as Jurich pointed out, "Louisville needed Conference USA much more than Conference USA needed Louisville."

Today Louisville is easily the most vibrant, viable and attractive school in the league. And in 2005 it will commence aiming even higher.

You want billboard material? You've got it. Louisville might not be the Best College Sports Town in America, but it's a better one today than it ever has been.

Before the official announcement yesterday, Klein stood at a podium in the U of L football complex, preparing to make introductions. Someone flipped a switch, and behind him a projection screen rolled up.

Behind the screen was the Big East banner that had been sitting on the table in his office earlier in the day. The symbolic wrinkles had been ironed out. And as the screen rolled up, Klein couldn't help but smile.

TRIBUTE TO MONA VANNATTER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Mona Vannatter. On December 31, 2003, Mona will be retiring after 20 years of service at the Kentucky Rural Development State Office.

Raised in Anderson, IN, Mona graduated from Ball State University with an associate's degree. However, in 1978, she moved to the Bluegrass State with her husband, Steve, and their two daughters, Kristi and Sheri. Though a Hoosier by birth, Mona is a Wildcat at heart.

In 1983, Mona became the secretary to the State director of the Kentucky Rural Development State Office. Since that time, she has proven to be a dedicated and talented employee. Her colleagues praise her as a wonderful representative of the office who genuinely

cares about the Kentuckians with whom she interacts. In 2003, Mona was recognized for exemplary performance as secretary to the State director. For the past several years, she has also donated her time and energy to coordinating the United Way Combined Federal Campaign for the agency and successfully reaching the Rural Department goals.

Mona brings the same enthusiasm and energy to her life outside of work. An active member of Broadway Christian Church, Mona served as secretary for her Sunday school class and co-coordinator for God's Pantry. She taught a self-improvement class at the Women's Federal Prison Camp, bringing a positive influence and an optimistic outlook to those who need it most.

For two decades, she has been a dedicated employee of the Kentucky Rural Development State Office. Mona continually proves to be a positive influence in both her workplace and her community. I ask each of my colleagues to join me in thanking Mona Vannatter for all that she has done for her community, the commonwealth of Kentucky, and this great Nation.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of a fellow Iowan and a great American, CWO4 Bruce A. Smith, who recently gave his life in service to his country as a pilot in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Chief Warrant Officer Smith was killed on November 2, 2003, after his helicopter was attacked by a surface-to-air missile 40 miles west of Baghdad in central Iraq. He is survived by his wife Oliva, his 15-year-old daughter Savannah, his 12-year-old son Nathan, his sisters Carol and Brenda, and his brother Brian, as well as numerous other family members, friends, and loved ones. Our deepest sympathies go out to the members of Chief Warrant Officer Smith's family and to all those who have been touched by his untimely passing.

Our Nation's strength resides in the hearts of the men and the women who serve in its defense. The liberties we prize and the freedoms we cherish would not exist if it were not for those who courageously risk their lives while serving in our Nation's Armed Forces. Although our history books are filled with the names of those great patriots whose actions defined our Nation's founding, and although we stand in awe of our fathers and our grandfathers for the heroism they displayed during the great wars of the 20th century, from time to time we are reminded that men and women of such stature can still be found defending our Nation and our way of life.

Today, we pay tribute to one such man, CWO4 Bruce A. Smith. Chief Warrant Officer Smith enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard as a senior in high school, serving his Nation with distinction for more than 23 years, first

as a medic and then as a pilot, before losing his life in Iraq. Chief Warrant Officer Smith's exemplary career in the National Guard, his commitment to his family, and his sense of duty attest to his character as an outstanding American.

As I stand before you today to honor a fallen patriot, I would also like to use this opportunity to extend my deepest sympathies to Chief Warrant Officer Smith's loved ones. While we share their grief, we cannot possibly fully understand their sense of loss. We owe them a debt that can never be repaid and I know they will be in the thoughts and prayers of many Americans.

CWO4 Bruce A. Smith has entered the ranks of our Nation's great patriots, and his courage, his dedication to duty, and his sacrifice are all testaments to his status as a true American hero. Let us always remember Chief Warrant Officer Smith's service to our Nation.

I also speak today in honor of a fellow Iowan and a great American, SGT Paul F. "Ringo" Fisher, who recently gave his life in service to his country as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On November 2, 2003, the helicopter in which Sergeant Fisher was riding was forced to make a crash landing about 40 miles west of Baghdad after being struck by a shoulder-fired missile. Sergeant Fisher sustained multiple injuries in the crash, which ultimately led to his death 4 days later on November 6, 2003, at the Homburg University Klinikum in Homburg, Germany. Sergeant Fisher is survived by his wife Karen, his stepson Jason, his mother Mary, his sister Brenda, and his brother David, as well as numerous other family members, friends, and loved ones.

I ask my colleagues in the Senate and my fellow citizens across our great Nation to join me today in paying tribute to Sergeant Fisher for his bravery, for his dedication to the cause of freedom, and for his sacrifice in defense of the liberties we all so dearly prize. The selflessness of a soldier is unmatched in the history of human endeavors, and mankind knows no greater act of courage than that displayed by the individual upon sacrificing his life for his countrymen, their liberty, and their way of life.

Although we honor Sergeant Fisher as a fallen patriot, we must also pay special tribute to his loved ones whose grief we share, but whose sense of loss we cannot possibly fully understand. My deepest sympathy goes out to the members of Sergeant Fisher's family, to his friends, and to all those who have been touched by his untimely passing. Although there is nothing I can offer that will ever compensate for their loss, I hope they will find some comfort in the thoughts and prayers of a grateful Nation who will be forever in their debt.

Our national history is filled with ordinary men and women who sacrificed their lives in service to our country.

An avid student of history, Sergeant Fisher enjoyed learning about the heroes who preceded him, especially those who brought our Nation through the great wars of the 20th century. It is thus with great solemnity that we today pay tribute to SGT Paul F. "Ringo" Fisher, who has himself attained heroic status, having joined the ranks of our Nation's greatest patriots and history's most courageous souls.

SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD, FDR, FREEDOM FROM FEAR, AND COURTING YOUR GIRL WITH ANOTHER BOY'S BUBBLE GUM

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is an honor to take the floor now to join all Senators on both sides of the aisle in extending our warmest birthday wishes to the Senator who in so many ways is respected as Mr. United States Senate by us all, our friend and eminent colleague from the State of West Virginia, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD.

Senator BYRD is 86 years young today, with the emphasis on "young," because he truly is young in the same best sense we regard our Nation itself as young, inspiring each new generation to uphold its fundamental ideals of freedom and opportunities and justice for all.

Senator BYRD's personal story is the very essence of the American dream, born to a hard life in the coal mines of West Virginia, rising to the high position of majority leader, a copy of the Constitution in his pocket and in his heart, insisting with great eloquence and equally great determination, day in and day out, year in and year out, that the Senate, our Senate, live up to the ideals and responsibilities that those who created the Senate gave us. Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Franklin, Webster, Clay, Calhoun—they each live on today in Senator ROBERT BYRD, and they would be proud of all he has done in our day and generation to make the Senate the Senate it is intended to be.

On a personal note, I am always very touched on this day in remembering the unusual coincidence that Senator BYRD was born on the same day as my brother Robert Kennedy and in the same year as my brother, President Kennedy, and was married on President Kennedy's birthday.

In the many years we have served together, he has taught me many things about the Senate, especially how to count votes. He did me one of the biggest favors of my life, although I did not feel that way at the time. On that occasion over 30 years ago, we were each certain we had a majority of democratic votes. We couldn't both be right, and Senator BYRD was right. All these years later, like so many others among us, I still learn from his eloquence whenever he takes the floor and reminds the Senate to be more vigilant about living up to our constitutional trust.

Senator BYRD has received many honors in his brilliant career, and the

honor he received last Saturday in Hyde Park in New York was among the highest. He was honored with The Freedom from Fear Award by The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute. The award is named for one of the Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear—in President Roosevelt's famous State of the Union Address to Congress in 1942, a few weeks after the Second World War began. The award also harks back to FDR's First Inaugural Address in 1933, in which he rallied the Nation from the depths of the Great Depression with the famous words, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

In his address accepting the award, Senator BYRD emphasized the importance of renewing our dedication to the Nation's ideals in the very difficult times we face today, when the temptations are so great once again to put aside our freedoms in order to safeguard our security. As Senator Byrd said so eloquently, in a lesson each of us should hear and heed:

Carry high the banner of this Republic, else we fall into the traps of censorship and repression. The darkness of fear must never be allowed to extinguish the precious light of liberty.

Senator BYRD's address in Hyde Park also contains a very beautiful and moving passage about the person who has been his lifelong best friend and strongest supporter all through these years, the coal miner's daughter he married 66 years ago, his wife Erma.

I wish them both many, many happy returns on this special day, and I ask unanimous consent that Senator BYRD's extraordinary address on receiving the Roosevelt "Freedom from Fear" Award be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

COURAGE FROM CONVICTION

I thank Ann Roosevelt and William "Bill" vanden Heuvel (the Great!) and the Board of the Roosevelt Institute for this distinct, unique honor. I also thank my colleague, a colleague sui generis. Yes, Senator Hillary Clinton came to my office and she said that she wanted to be a good senator. And she said, "How shall I do it? How shall I go about it? I want to work for the people of New York. I want to be a good senator." And I did say, "Be a work horse, not a show horse." She took that to heart, and she has been a fine senator. She has never forgotten that admonition. She has been a good senator and I am delighted to be here in her state this morning. This is an extraordinary award, for which she recommended me so graciously.

I am humbled to be deemed a practitioner of President Roosevelt's great vision. I am proud to be associated once again with my friend and quondam colleague, former Senator and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell. Ah, what a shame, as we have witnessed the lowering of the Senate's standards. And how proud I would be to be able to vote for a great federal judge to grace the Supreme Court of the United States, George Mitchell. I would have no doubt that he would honor this Constitution of the United States of America. And I hope that, I trust that, the Great Physician, the Great Law-

giver, might bless me so that I might live to see that day.

I congratulate the other exceptional laureates, and I am proud to be their colleague. I am proud to be numbered with the previous Four Freedom recipients.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt—ah, the voice! I can hear it. I can hear it yet as it wafted its way through the valleys, up the creeks and down the hollows in the coal camps of Southern West Virginia. That voice—there was nothing like it. Franklin Roosevelt was a man of tremendous courage. A leader of uncommon vision and optimism. An orator of compelling passion. He looms large, oh so large, in my boyhood memory. I grew up in the home of a coal miner. I married a coal miner's daughter. I thank her today for her guidance, her advice, her constant confidence in me that she has always shown.

Studs (Terkel), I tell you how I won the hand of that coal miner's daughter some 66 years ago. We had in my high school class a lad named Julius Takach. He was of a Hungarian family. His father owned a little store down in Cooktown, about 4 miles from Stotesbury, where I grew up. And each morning, Julius Takach would come to school with his pockets full of candy and chewing gum from his father's store's shelves. I always made it my business to greet Julius Takach at the schoolhouse door upon his arrival! And he would give me some of that candy and chewing gum. I never ate the candy. I never chewed the chewing gum. I proudly walked the halls of Mark Twain High School to see my sweetheart as the classes changed, and I gave her that candy and chewing gum. Now do you think I told her that Julius Takach gave me that candy and that chewing gum? Why, no! Studs, that's how you court your girl with another boy's bubble gum!

The stock market crashed in October 1929. I was 12 years old. I had \$7 that I had saved up selling the Cincinnati Post. I had that \$7 in the bank at Matoaka, West Virginia. The bank went under, and I haven't seen my \$7 since. I struggled to find my first job working at a gas station during the Great Depression. I was 24 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

I can remember the voice of President Roosevelt on the radio in those days. His voice carried over the crackle and static of my family's old Philco set. President Roosevelt understood the nation. He understood its history. He understood its character, its ethos. He understood the Constitution. He respected the Constitution.

In Marietta, Ohio, in 1938, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said: "Let us not be afraid to help each other—let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country." President Roosevelt was right.

Especially in these days, when we find ourselves in dangerous waters, I remind the nation of President's Roosevelt's charge: the government is ourselves. I have called on my colleagues in Congress to stand as the Framers intended.

I saw them tearing a building down
A group of men in a busy town
With a "Ho, Heave, Ho" and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the sidewall fell.
I said to the foreman, "Are these men skilled?"

The type you would hire if you had to build?"

He laughed, and then he said, "No indeed, Just common labor is all I need; I can easily wreck in a day or two, That which takes builders years to do."