

worked tirelessly to get approval for the creation of the Captain Rocky Versace Memorial Plaza and Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the Captain's boyhood neighborhood in the Del Ray section of Alexandria.

At the conclusion of this year's POW/MIA Vigil, Mr. Gurr made a powerful speech to the UVA ROTC cadets on the great history of honor by Vietnam POWs, which produced five Medal of Honor recipients, and made Rocky Versace the only Army POW to receive the Medal of Honor for his heroism while in captivity during the Vietnam War.

Mr. President, I'd like to enter John Gurr's inspiring words as an extension of my remarks:

I am indeed grateful for this opportunity to speak for my comrades in arms and I would thank you for this opportunity were it not axiomatic in the military profession that you never thank a soldier for doing his duty. You can commend him or her, and I herewith commend wholeheartedly the ROTC cadet corps of the University of Virginia for the vigil you have mounted in memory of our nation's POWs and MIAs. It was your duty to do so, and you did it well. I will share with you up front that I came to this amphitheater last night at around 0200 to witness your vigil for myself. I stood in the deep background for over a half an hour and watched your sentinels, and I thought about what message I will carry to you today.

Here it is in a nutshell, young men and women: the heroic legacies of our fighting men and women, most certainly including those men who suffered so terribly yet endured with honor in the torture chambers of the Vietnamese communist forces, the heroic legacies of those predecessors are soon to pass to you. Be ready, because they are sacred. Duty, Honor, Country. Duty—be professionally ready, do your duty well; do something extra. Honor—guard and cherish your personal honor. Country—stand ready to ever defend this great democracy, which is a unique bastion in a dangerous world.

A bit of background on the POW situation as it developed and ended in Vietnam. There were 771 Americans captured or interned in the Vietnam War, far, far fewer than in any of our major interventions since World War I. 113 of them—almost 15%—died in captivity. The vast majority of POWs were officers, most of them aviators shot down in the north, and the vast majority of them were held in North Vietnam. There were some 19 such prison camps, where a rough total of some 550 men were held. In the north, brutal tortures were the rule, and the death rate was about 5%.

In the much smaller and equally scattered prison camps in South Vietnam and Laos, hunger and disease and brutality were common, but torture was much less systematic. Even so, the death rate in the southern camps was about 20%—four times higher than in the north where food and medical care and the support of fellow prisoners made the chances of survival better.

As to the purpose of torture in the northern camps, let me quote from Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale, who suffered 7½ years in captivity there and was the ranking man in the camps. I quote from his "Afterword" in the famed book *Honor Bound* which details the experiences of American POWs in Southeast Asia:

"I was the only wing commander in that long war to lead prisoner resistance and therefore the natural target for Major Bui—'The Cat'—Commissar of the North Viet-

namese prison camps. The business of the Commissar was extortion. He had to continually intimidate—to break—a number of POWs so that he had Americans at the ready to parade before press conferences for foreign 'dignitaries' (often Americans from the anti-war movement) and to exploit for propaganda statements favorable to the communist agenda. Our job was to hold out as long as we could, to make it difficult for The Cat to exploit us. To do this, he hired experienced 'torture guards' who in 40 minutes or so, with bars and ropes, could reduce a self-respecting American officer to a sobbing wreck."

Admiral Stockdale and his fellow prisoners in the north early decided that their goal was to resist as best they could and return to the U.S. with honor. I say again, "with honor." Thus the title of the book from which I quote, "Honor Bound." The American POWs were "Honor Bound." Under circumstances that will draw a tear if you understand. Admiral Stockdale was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor upon his return. Duty well done, Admiral! Well done!

As to the prisoners in South Vietnam, I will speak with an indirect credibility of the experience of a West Point classmate of mine, Captain "Rocky" Versace. I will speak with a passion because "Rocky" was a friend of mine, and he, too, won the Congressional Medal of Honor for his resistance and leadership as a prisoner of war. A difference is that Versace was executed for his stubborn, and often even argumentative and aggressive resistance to the communist effort to break him for propaganda purposes. The Medal of Honor was presented posthumously, to "Rocky's" family in the White House on July 8, 2002, in the presence of 250 people which included 89 of his West Point classmates. As we said to ourselves at the time, "We came for you 'Rocky.' We were late, but we came." "Rocky" Versace's story is one of a young man of exceptional physical endurance and truly extraordinary mental toughness. He was deeply religious, and he had come to love and admire the South Vietnamese people for whom and alongside whom he had fought for almost 18 months before he was severely wounded in battle and captured in October 1963. For the first five months of his captivity in the Delta of South Vietnam he was held in a small camp with only two other American prisoners. Successive teams of Viet Cong indoctrinators sought to break "Rocky," to get him to make statements rejecting the South Vietnamese effort to resist a communist takeover, and they tried to get him to make recordings or quick movies opposing America's intervention on behalf of the South Vietnamese forces. Fluent in Vietnamese and French, he argued so credibly with his indoctrinators that they had to switch to English because they began to notice that the enlisted communist guards were starting to nod their heads in agreement with some of "Rocky's" rebuttals. "Rocky's" fellow prisoners heard him say in one of the indoctrination sessions "You can make me come here, and you can make me listen, but frankly I don't believe a word you say and you can go to hell." On another occasion they heard him say "I know that if I am true to myself and to my God, that something better awaits in the hereafter. So you might as well kill me now."

"Rocky" attempted escape four times and was captured, beaten and leg-ironed in a stifling bamboo cage after each such unsuccessful attempt. Only three weeks after his capture and on his first attempt, he had to drag himself through the jungle on his belly because he had taken three rounds in his right leg in the battle in which he'd been captured, and he could not walk. As a captain and the ranking man in his POW camp, he sought to

encourage his somewhat separated fellow prisoners by singing "God Bless America" and other popular or patriotic songs, frequently inserting a stray word or two to communicate with his men. "Rocky" set the example, and he took the heat off his fellow prisoners.

After five months, "Rocky" was deemed to be an incorrigible propaganda prospect, and he was taken from the camp and held in isolation. That's where he was held for the last 18 months of his 23-month captivity. Alone, emaciated by hunger and disease, his head swollen and yellow from jaundice. There were occasional reports during that time from villagers who said that "Rocky" was frequently led or dragged through their villages as a sad example of what the American fighting man looked like. Even so, they said that "Rocky" sometimes interrupted the propaganda diatribes in the village centers, refuting and embarrassing his captors in his fluent Vietnamese. He was beaten, and one report said that, as he went down, he smiled. "Rocky" Versace was a winner.

He was executed in September 1965, ending not only his life but his imminent plan to leave the Army and return to South Vietnam as a Maryknoll missionary. He had been accepted to become a priest-candidate at the Maryknoll Order in Tarrytown, NY. But he never made it there.

Thus ended the life of a decent man, a courageous and unbreakable soldier, and now the only Army man to get the Medal of Honor for conduct as a POW during the Vietnam War.

And now let's turn to you. What you've just heard is a part of your legacy. You must not let it down. Last night there was just one old soldier sitting there in the back of this amphitheater, watching you, watching your vigil, and witnessing the changing of the guard. In a few short months or years, your turn will come to bear the mantle of Duty, Honor, Country. And there will be a ghostly phalanx of old soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines who will always, I repeat "always," be watching you. You cannot fall short of the standard that has been set.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak for my past and present comrades, we commend you for doing your duty so well, and my last words to you are:

Be ready. Be ready.

Mr. President, I would like to commend John Gurr and the ROTC cadets at the University of Virginia for their dedicated service to our Nation and for their work to honor those like Captain Rocky Versace who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of America and its ideals. I wish them Godspeed as they stand strong for freedom.●

(At the request of Mr. DASCHLE, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

The PASSING OF MEYER "MIKE" STEINBERG

● Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, on December 4, 2003, an outstanding example of the American Dream ended with the passing of Meyer "Mike" Steinberg. Mike was a young 84 with a personal vitality and clarity of mind that many far younger people would envy. He was recently stricken with lung cancer even though he had given up smoking more than 30 years ago. He was an individual admired and beloved by those who had the good fortune to know him in his lifetime. This past

Sunday, December 7, Park Avenue Synagogue in New York was filled with 1,000 people who wanted to share the grief of his passing with his family who loved him so deeply that eight of his grandchildren, including an 11-year-old, wanted to share their innermost thoughts of affection and sadness with everyone gathered there.

Mike's life, his grit and determination, his business successes, and his devotion to family are the stuff of which books are often written. In every definition of the American Dream, Mike Steinberg would emerge as an ideal example. From the humblest beginnings, having to end his formal education at the age of 15, he went on, ultimately, to the role of a real estate magnate. He developed, owned, and managed properties from New York to Texas to California.

He was someone I was proud to know. He had a rare ability to attract admiration and respect from all who had contact with him and he will long be remembered as someone who proved that business success, devotion to family, pride in his heritage, and regard for others are still goals to be cherished in these days of disposable relationships.

We grieve his passing but we honor his being and I ask to have printed in the RECORD an item I placed in the New York Times on December 6 commemorating his extraordinary life.

The material follows.

[From the New York Times, Dec. 6, 2003]

STEINBERG, MEYER "MIKE".

Steinberg—Meyer "Mike". To our dearest husband and Dad from your five lucky girls. We are forever blessed with the love and life you showered upon us. There wasn't a time you weren't there are always knew we could count on you. Our hearts are broken and the void can never be filled. You will be cherished in our hearts forever and ever. We will always honor your memory and we will live our lives by the examples you set for us. You are our King of Hearts, our hero, we will love you forever. Jean, Susan, Bonnie, Carol, and Lois.

Steinberg—Meyer "Mike". Extraordinary beloved husband of Jean. Most cherished father of Susan Zises Green, Bonnie S. Englehardt, Carol S. and Michael Weisman, Lois Robbins Zaro and Andrew Zaro. Adoring and revered grandfather of Lynn Zises, Justin H. Green, Danielle and Lara Englehardt, Brett and Jad Weisman, Alex, Olivia, Stephen and Victoria Zaro. Great-grandfather of Isabelle Zises Krugman. Services Sunday, 1 pm, Park Avenue Synagogue, 87th and Madison Ave. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to honor his memory to the S.L.E. Foundation for Lupus Research, 149 Madison Ave., NY NY 10016. For further information call Plaza Community Jewish Chapel.

Steinberg—Meyer "Mike". An admired friend, extraordinary entrepreneur, beloved family leader, husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. To know him as I did, father of my dearest Bonnie Englehardt, was a special privilege. His success in the business world was outstanding, but it never interfered with his role as the family patriarch. The risks that he took in his business life were always motivated by his desire to protect his family's security. His love of family extended as well to philanthropy. He supported Israel's survival and the fight to

cure Lupus disease, among many other programs to help the needy. He was a special human being, someone I cared deeply about, and his memory will be forever an inspiration to all who knew him. Frank R. Lautenberg United States Senator.

Steinberg—Meyer. The Officers, Trustees, Clergy and Members of Park Avenue Synagogue mourn the passing of a devoted congregant. We extend to his wife Jean, his daughters Susan, Bonnie, Carol and Lois and the entire family our heartfelt sympathy. David H. Lincoln Senior Rabbi Amy A.B. Bressman Chairman of the Board Menachem Z. Rosensaft President.

Steinberg—Meyer. The Directors and staff of the S.L.E. Lupus Foundation and the Lupus Research Institute mourn the loss of our dear friend Mike Steinberg, a devoted champion in the fight to conquer lupus. We extend our deepest sympathies to the Steinberg family, his devoted wife Jean and his beloved daughters Bonnie, Carol, Lois, and Susan. Richard K. DeScherer President, The S.L.E. Lupus Foundation.

Steinberg—Meyer. The Gural Family would like to extend its deepest sympathies to the family of Meyer Steinberg. We were proud to call Meyer our friend and partner. He was a true humanitarian, a charitable person in every sense of the word, and his presence will be greatly missed. Our hearts go out to Jean, Susan, Bonnie, Carol, Lois and the entire Steinberg Family for their loss.

Steinberg—Meyer "Mike". The Board of Governors and the members of The Seawane Club record with sorrow the loss of our beloved member, Meyer "Mike" Steinberg. We extend heartfelt sympathy to his wife Jean and family. Ted Markson, President.

Steinberg—Meyer "Mike". We are heartbroken at the passing of our dear friend. Mike had great courage, accomplishment and was a generous philanthropist. Our condolences to his beloved wife Jean and family. He will be missed but not forgotten. Elma and Milton Gilbert.

Steinberg—Meyer. Newmark and Company Real Estate wishes to extend its condolences to the Steinberg Family, on the loss of their husband, father and grandfather Meyer Steinberg. He was both a friend and partner, and he will be greatly missed.

Steinberg—M. "Mike". It is with deepest regret that we mourn the loss of a wonderful, caring person who entered our lives years ago and was a model friend, husband, father and leader of people. Our heart goes out to Jean and her beautiful family. Barbara and Philip Altheim.

Steinberg—Meyer. Our deepest condolences to the Steinberg family on the loss of their beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather. Mike was a man of great fortitude and charity and he will be missed. The Zises family.

Steinberg—Meyer "Mike". To Jean and his beloved children and grandchildren, our sincerest condolences. We will sorely miss our dear friend, Love, Laura and Artie Ratner.

Steinberg—Meyer (Mike). My heartfelt sympathy to the Steinberg family on the their loss. Mike will be greatly missed by all his friend and associates. Norman F. Levy.●

PASSING OF FORMER CONGRESSMAN JOE SKEEN

● Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, with a heavy sense of sadness today, we mark the passing of former Congressman Joe Skeen from New Mexico.

On Sunday night, Joe Skeen lost his valiant battle with Parkinson's disease. Joe's passing is very hard for me

to accept even though he had been ill for so long. We have lost a great friend to New Mexico. Joe fit his district like a hand in a glove, and that fact will define his legacy as a public servant and a man of the people. My heart goes out to Mary and the Skeen family. In visiting with them, I know their sadness and sense of loss is severe.

I had the highest honor of serving the State of New Mexico with this amazing man for more than 20 years. Joe was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1980 as a write-in candidate. He is only the third man in the history of this country to achieve this feat.

As great an accomplishment as this was, history will show that it was among the least of his great achievements. As I am sure you can imagine, the litany of successes that Joe has had in his work for New Mexico is much too long to go into here today. Suffice it to say that New Mexico is infinitely better for having had Joe Skeen representing us in Congress; this country is better for having had Joe participate in making decisions that affect the entire Nation.

Joe was the first to tell you that he had not done it on his own, however. He had a partner in his great adventure who walked beside him every step of the way. Mary, his wife of 57 years, was a calming influence in the storm that is the life of a Congressman. She made it possible for Joe to continue to be a ranching Representative, running the family ranch while Joe served in Washington.

Since Joe Skeen retired from Congress in 2002, I have missed working with him on behalf of New Mexico. We were partners in so many projects for more than three decades. I am from our State's largest city, Albuquerque, and Joe was a rancher from one of the many rural parts of our State. Our different backgrounds did not prevent us from working together; rather, I would characterize them as allowing us to form an even better partnership on behalf of New Mexico.

We first got to know each other in 1960 when I was fresh out of law school and Joe was an up and coming member of our party. A decade later, in 1970, we teamed up together to run for Governor and Lieutenant Governor respectively. And, again in 1980, when Joe Skeen was first elected to Congress, we had the opportunity once again to work side-by-side. More than anything, Joe and I were able to use our respective positions on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to help New Mexico. He was always a good, solid and dependable man, and always a champion for his district. He certainly left huge shoes for those who follow him.

Today, my wife Nancy and I mourn. Joe is at rest, and our prayers are now with Mary, who has been such a force behind Joe and all his work.●

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