

provide for, establish and regulate a fire department in the Borough of Wharton" was declared law by Mayor Harry J. Williams on February 15, 1904. The ordinance designated a Chief, First Assistant Chief and Second Assistant Chief. It also called for the formation of three companies: the Active Hose Company with twenty members, the Independent Hook and Ladder Company with forty members, and the Board of Fire Wardens composed of twenty members. A list of names were read and approved on April 4, 1904. Charles Hance was the first Chief of the Wharton Fire Department, Robert Oram was approved as the first Assistant Chief and John McKenna was approved as the Second Assistant Chief.

To get started, the Wharton Fire Department borrowed two two-wheeled, hand drawn hose carriages from first Assistant Chief Robert Oram. Soon after, the Fire Department ordered a hose cart and a hand drawn hook and ladder truck. Several other hose carts and horse-drawn ladder trucks were purchased until the first gasoline-motorized piece of equipment, an "REO" fire truck, was purchased and put into use in 1916.

The first means of alerting the firemen to an emergency was by striking large locomotive rims located in several sections of town. Then, in December 1904, an 8-inch steam whistle was installed at the Hurd Mine. After the mine was closed, the whistle was transferred to the furnace and then to the Gunther Silk Mill. This trusty steam whistle was used until 1918 when a manually controlled electric siren was installed in a cupola atop the Borough Hall. In 1929, the first of 19 fire alarm boxes were installed on street corners across the Borough. In the 1950's, additional electronic sirens were installed as the population of the town increased: Today, every Saturday at noon, the fire alarm system is tested by the four sirens still in use. But the Department is dispatched, by home radio receivers and personal pagers.

To commemorate the Wharton Fire Department's 100th Anniversary, the Borough hosted fire companies from all over New Jersey and the surrounding area on June 5, 2004. The Wharton Fire Department has always been known for its marching ability and its drill team, and first marched in August of 1907 in nearby Hackettstown. The Department won its first prize in 1908 and today over 200 trophies adorn the walls of their firehouse.

The Wharton Fire Department has grown over the years to meet the changing demands of the town and to incorporate the newest firefighting and lifesaving technologies. From its charter members to its current roster, the membership of the Wharton Fire Department has over the last century dedicated itself to the safety and welfare of Wharton's good citizens. Wharton's firefighters, dedicated public servants, past and present, are to be commended for a job well done.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you and my colleagues to join me in congratulating the volunteers of the Wharton Fire Department on the celebration of 100 years of a rich history in the protection of one of New Jersey's finest municipalities.

HONORING THE FIREFIGHTERS WHO SAVED LAKE ARROWHEAD

HON. JERRY LEWIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 2004

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to call attention to the federal, state and local firefighters whose bravery and quick thinking saved thousands of homes and many lives in the San Bernardino Mountains of California last year. Representatives of these community heroes are in town this week for well-deserved national recognition from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and I would like to add my voice to the acclaim they are receiving.

My colleagues have heard me say many times on this floor that we are facing a terrible crisis in our Southern California forests. Years of drought have weakened the trees, and allowed the pine bark beetle to attack and kill millions of them—leaving hundreds of acres ready to burn at any time. More than 100,000 of my constituents live among these trees, and their lives and safety are at risk until we remove these dead and dying trees.

In October last year, the disaster we feared struck California—and struck and struck again. Within days, fires were consuming tens of thousands of acres in San Bernardino, Los Angeles, San Diego and Ventura counties. In my district, a fire started in the foothills and spread to 100 acres within ten minutes. In less than an hour, it became clear that nearby communities would need to be evacuated. By nightfall the Old Fire consumed over 4,000 acres of land. It destroyed 400 homes and was responsible for two fatalities before the day was out. Ultimately, nearly 1,000 homes were lost.

As dawn arrived on October 26, Fire Incident Commander Norm Walker was contemplating the distinct possibility of the worst-case scenario: fire reaching the 40,000 homes in the Lake Arrowhead community. Mandatory evacuations of all of the mountain communities began. Resources were stretched to the absolute maximum, due to other fires burning throughout the state.

The San Bernardino Mountains rise steeply to 10,000 feet above the city, and running along the face of the mountains between 5,000 feet and 7,000 feet is the famous Rim of the World Highway, State Route 18. This is also the last point where the fire could be stopped before roaring into the millions of dead trees in and around our mountain communities. By evening on October 26, the main fire crossed Highway 18, and the order was given to begin backfiring along the highway across the mountain rim to the east. The northeast winds were predicted to shift, which would push the flames north across Highway 18 and directly into the community of Lake Arrowhead.

Four highly trained firefighters in a unified command, Randy Clauson (USFS), Jim Ahearn (USFS), George Corley (San Bernardino County Fire), and Bill Bagnell (Crest Forest Fire) initiated the difficult, strenuous firing operation at 9:00 pm using limited personnel. Except for radio communication, these four on-the-scene chiefs were largely on their own. Every member of their teams faced the possibility of being caught by 100-foot

walls of flame that were sweeping up the mountains. But they stayed the course for the next two days—and the success of their operation is evidenced by the fact that nearly all of the mountain homes were spared.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind the heroic, exhausting efforts of these four individuals over the course of three days resulted in saving thousands of homes and billions of dollars of infrastructure around Lake Arrowhead. Anyone who has seen photos of the conditions along Highway 18 during the height of the fire is in awe of the courage and fortitude of these firefighters, and mountain residents will be forever grateful for saving their homes.

In honor of those efforts, the fire chiefs on Friday will receive the U.S. Department of Agriculture Honor Award for heroism and emergency response. I ask my colleagues to please join me in congratulating them on this recognition, and thanking them for representing the highest level of bravery and resourcefulness in defending and saving our communities.

SYMPATHIES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF LANCE CORPORAL PEDRO CONTRERAS

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 2004

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Lance Corporal Pedro Contreras.

Lance Cpl. Contreras was a constituent of the 29th District of Texas, and a true hero, who died on June 21, 2004 while serving his country in the Al Anbar Province, Iraq.

Pedro Contreras joined the Marine Corps on May 7, 2001, five years after graduating from Galena Park High School.

Lance Cpl. Contreras was a rifleman assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force based in Camp Pendleton, California, where he earned several honors, including the National Defense Service Medal and the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon.

Pedro Contreras leaves behind his two parents, Jose and Angela Contreras, and three brothers.

I know his parents, family and friends are devastated by this loss, but they should be proud of the great man Pedro Contreras had become and that he died a hero while serving his country.

His loss will be felt by all of our community, and I ask that you remember the Contreras family in your thoughts and prayers.

TRIBUTE TO COMMANDER CHRISTOPHER A. RHODEN, USN

HON. C. W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 2004

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and pay tribute to an outstanding Naval Officer, Commander Chris

Rhoden, to recognize his service to our Nation and the Navy as he leaves the Pentagon to pursue his first love, commanding a Naval ship.

On behalf of my colleagues in the House and on the Appropriations Committee, I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his distinguished and dedicated service.

It was through his assignment with the Navy's Appropriations Liaison office that I first came to know Commander Rhoden. In this capacity, he served as an invaluable liaison for the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations to me, the members of my committee, and our staff.

In addition to providing timely and accurate information on budget matters, Commander Rhoden also has escorted me and other Members of Congress on several occasions as we traveled both home and abroad to review military operations and confirm the health and welfare of our troops. He provided special insight on matters of national security, naval shipbuilding, and the direct relationship between the two. His candor, intelligence, and steadfast devotion to duty, was always very much appreciated and he was an invaluable asset to me during deliberations regarding funding programs for our armed forces. His perspective on the needs of the Nation with respect to our sea services provided me with the clarity and detail I needed to make important decisions regarding appropriations for the Department of Defense.

In addition to the respect I have for the work Commander Rhoden did in representing the Navy, I also thank him for the calm demeanor and sense of humor he shared with us all. Chris has become a mentor and friend to me and to my family, and for that I will always be grateful. It is this same sense of purpose and professionalism that I am confident will make Commander Rhoden a tremendous role model for those who serve under his command.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to recognize Commander Rhoden for his distinguished service to our nation. My wife Beverly and I have the highest respect for those who serve in uniform, and I appreciate and honor all the men and women who have served, and continue to serve, in defense of freedom. Recalling our national anthem, to our veterans and Armed Forces, I say, we would not be "the land of the free" were we not also the "home of the brave."

Mr. Speaker, My colleagues and I want to express our thanks and appreciation for the special contribution Commander Rhoden has made to the United States Navy. We wish him and his family continued success and the traditional naval wish of "Fair winds and Following seas" as he closes out his service to the Congress and continues toward the pinnacle of Naval service, command at sea of a United States warship.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 2004

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I want to explain why I voted against the Rapid Acquisition Authority for Combat Emergencies Bill (H.R. 4323), when it was added to the suspension calendar for a vote earlier this week.

During the past year, we have seen repeated examples of waste, fraud, and abuse in contracts awarded by the U.S. Defense Department to the Halliburton Corporation and other military contractors that have poorly served our troops and the American taxpayers. Not only do I lack confidence that such procurement sloth has stopped, those of us in Congress who have called for in-depth congressional investigations have been stonewalled.

In light of this dismal track record, Congress should not open the door even wider and provide even greater authority for the Pentagon to award lucrative contracts to contractors without competition and with even less scrutiny and congressional oversight. Nevertheless, H.R. 4323 would waive existing safeguards against war profiteering and other contract abuses.

Congress is already moving to authorize and appropriate up to \$1.2 billion to provide additional equipment for our troops in every instance where critical shortages have been identified. That is one of the important reasons why I voted in favor of the FY 2005 Defense Authorization Bill, when the House passed it last month.

Finally, the supporters of this bill claim it is needed to cut through existing, cumbersome Pentagon acquisition regulations to respond to urgent needs of our troops in combat emergencies. But there is mounting evidence to the contrary. I believe the equipment shortages among some of our troops in Iraq during the past year resulted from poor pre-war planning and serious miscalculations in the Pentagon by the architects of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Quite simply, U.S. Army war planners didn't issue enough purchase orders, before the invasion of Iraq was launched, to ensure that all of our troops on the ground in Iraq had what they needed during the conventional combat phase of this conflict. Those mistakes and the equipment shortages they caused became even more costly since President Bush announced the end of combat in Iraq on May 1, 2003, and the nature of the military threat changed and the armed insurgency expanded. This Congress should act to address those mistakes, not use them as an opportunity to hand out more no-bid contracts.

I believe H.R. 4323 could actually make a bad situation worse.

IN HONOR OF EDWARD LICHT

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 2004

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in tribute to Mr. Edward Licht, Bailiff for the Garfield Heights Municipal Court, as he is being honored as the Regional Court Officer of the Year by the Ohio Bailiff and Court Officers Association.

A life-long resident of Cuyahoga County, Mr. Licht served as a Special Agent with the U.S. Treasury Department for twenty-five years. During his tenure as Special Agent, Mr. Licht assisted in the investigation, apprehension and conviction of criminals involved in major gambling, illegal drug and money laundering operations. For his invaluable service, Mr. Licht was honored with several awards, includ-

ing two Special Achievement awards, One Superior Service award, and an Honorable Mention for Outstanding Community Service award. Since 1999, Mr. Licht has held the position of Bailiff with the Garfield Heights Municipal Court. His unwavering integrity, outstanding communication abilities and strong work ethic continues to uplift all facets of this regional court system.

Beyond his significant professional contributions, Mr. Licht continues to volunteer his time and talents within our community. He continues to be an active member of the Democratic Party within our community. A long-time member of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party, Mr. Licht currently serves as Deputy Treasurer. He has also been very active in the Independence Democratic Party for many years, as a member and an officer. Moreover, Mr. Licht continues to make an impact upon the lives of many as a volunteer probation officer with the Bedford and Garfield Heights court systems. His positive outlook and kind nature, combined with his sense of compassion and wonderful sense of humor, continuously serves to uplift those around him.

Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, please join me in honor and recognition of Mr. Ed Licht, upon being selected as the Regional Court Officer of the Year. Mr. Licht's professional contribution to our federal and regional justice system—reflected by strong ethics and a high level of integrity, continues to be significant and invaluable. Moreover, Mr. Licht's concern for his community and commitment to the democratic process continues to instill strength and integrity throughout the Democratic Party, and serves to strengthen our entire community.

HONORING EXEMPLARY EDUCATOR KATHY PUTMAN

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 24, 2004

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kathy Putman, an exemplary educator, who is retiring after forty years in the classroom at John F. Kennedy High School in Fremont, California. Immediately after graduating from San Jose State University, Kathy's career in education began at Kennedy High School.

She was among the first instructors when the new high school was opened in 1965. Teaching Government and Economics to high school seniors at Kennedy High School is the only job Kathy has ever had. She was only a couple of years older than her first students. Over the decades, she has taught many children of former students in her class.

For years Kennedy High School had a contest for "Most Popular Teacher." Kathy won so often the contest was discontinued. Each year her yearbook is filled with the penned thoughts of adoring students. Thousands of young Fremont students have passed through her classroom where the walls are covered with photographs and notes from former students. Assuming Kathy had 200–300 students a year, for 40 years, this adds up to between 8,000–12,000 students she has touched during her career.

I, along with former Congressman Don Edwards, California Attorney General Bill Lockyer