

tree." And this year, thousands of Virginians—from all ages and from all across the Commonwealth—have extended the right hand of friendship to their fellow Americans by providing this great tree for display in our Nation's capital.

At five o'clock on the evening of December 9, the Speaker of the House of Representatives will mark the official beginning of America's holiday season by lighting 10,000 small lights on a 79-year-old Virginia red spruce that, until last month, stood as one of Virginia's finest. Without question, it has lived through a remarkable period in our Nation's history.

That flip of a switch will culminate over a year of activity by ordinary Virginians, park rangers, State officials, schoolchildren and countless others in selecting, preparing and decorating this wonderful, 82-foot tree from Warm Springs Ranger District of the George Washington National Forest in Highland County.

All Virginians rightfully take pride that this 7,500 pound tree will remain lit each evening on the National Mall until the 2nd of January, welcoming the Christmas and Holiday season for citizens across this great land. Since the day last month that the tree was airlifted from its place in the George Washington National Forest, Virginians from every corner of the Commonwealth have played a part in getting this wonderful tree ready for primetime. Beginning on November 13, the spruce visited 33 communities in our State on its way to the National Mall: Monterey, Winchester, Leesburg, Culpeper, King George County, Westmoreland County, Henrico County, Petersburg, Charles City, Hampton, Onancock, Cape Charles, Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Suffolk, Emporia, South Boston, Chatham, Damascus, Smyth County/Marion, Wise, Tazewell, Wytheville, Clifton Forge, New Market, Staunton, New Castle, Roanoke, Orange, Amherst, Farmville, Manassas, Alexandria, and Vienna.

In addition to the thousands of Virginians who greeted the tree on its way to Washington, thousands of other school children, scouts, State and Federal officials, police departments, members of 4-H clubs, and citizen volunteers also took part in crafting and preparing some 10,000 original ornaments for the tree. Approximately 5,000 of these will hang on the holiday tree, and the rest will decorate 70 smaller companion trees in the Nation's capital.

As the time-intensive, individual contributions of tens of thousands of Virginians demonstrate, our State is proud to take a lead role this year in welcoming in the Christmas and holiday season for our fellow Americans. On a personal note, one of my longest-serving and hardest-working staff members, Ms. Doriene Steeves, has played a key organizing role in putting together this wonderful event for the benefit of our State and our Nation. I

salute her and those other Virginians whose hard work and creativity have brought this magnificent tree to the Nation's doorstep for all to see and appreciate through the holidays.

#### HONORING TOM BROKAW

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to publicly honor and recognize one of South Dakota's favorite sons, Tom Brokaw. He has had an extraordinarily successful career as anchor of NBC Nightly News. During his 21-year reign as anchor, NBC moved from the least watched to the most watched network newscast.

Born in Webster, SD, in 1940, Mr. Brokaw attended high school in Yankton, SD, and began his journalism career after graduating from the University of South Dakota in 1962. He was hired by NBC news in 1966.

Throughout his tenure at NBC, Mr. Brokaw has gathered an impressive list of accomplishments. In 1987, he was the first American to interview Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, and this exclusive one-on-one from the Kremlin earned him the prestigious Alfred I. duPont Award. Mr. Brokaw was also the first American anchor to interview the Dalai Lama and to report on human rights abuses in Tibet. In 1989, Mr. Brokaw was the only anchor at the scene when the Berlin Wall fell, and in 1995 he was the first anchor to report from the site of the Oklahoma City bombing. He was also the first American anchor to interview Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2000. Mr. Brokaw has reported live from war zones in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo.

Mr. Brokaw is a highly respected political journalist, having covered every American election since 1968. He anchored all of NBC's political coverage from 1984 through 2004, including primaries, national conventions, and election nights. He has also moderated nine primary and general election debates, including the Presidential debates of 1987 and 1991.

In 1997, Mr. Brokaw won his second duPont award for "Why Can't We Live Together," a documentary examining the racial separation within American suburbs. He won his first Peabody award in 1989 for examining American society in his report, "To Be An American," and received another Peabody in 2004 for "Tom Brokaw Reports: A Question of Fairness," which discussed the University of Michigan affirmative action case and the history of affirmative action in the United States. Mr. Brokaw has received seven Emmy awards for reports on China, the 1992 floods in the Midwest, and the 1999 Kosovo conflict, among others.

With his 1998 book "The Greatest Generation," Mr. Brokaw became a best selling author. "The Greatest Generation Speaks," "An Album of Memories," and "A Long Way from Home" subsequently followed. He has also contributed to The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, Newsweek, and Time.

Prior to his position as sole anchor for NBC Nightly News, Mr. Brokaw served as Whitehouse Correspondent for NBC from 1973 to 1976, reporting on the Watergate scandal, and from 1976 to 1981 he anchored NBC's "Today."

After 38 years with NBC, Tom and his wife Meredith will be moving on to new challenges. Tom and Meredith have never forgotten their South Dakota roots and have returned home with great frequency. Their generous contributions of time and financial assistance to projects in Yankton, at the University of South Dakota, and throughout our State reflects their wonderful spirit of giving and a commitment to an enhanced quality of life for all South Dakotans. It is with great honor that I share his impressive accomplishments with my colleagues.

#### IN HONOR OF THE ARLES GREENE FAMILY

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I have a few words before we adjourn for the holidays. This isn't the first year that there will be a lot of empty places at our holiday dinner tables. Even if our own table doesn't have a missing spot, we know a neighbor or a friend whose brother, mother, or husband is away fighting to keep us safe at home. These empty places remind us of the generations of men and women who have sacrificed to keep us free so that we can, in freedom, celebrate those holidays that are important to each of us.

Today I rise to honor the service of the family of Arles Greene of Hendersonville, TN. Arles's family has a lot of empty places around their dinner table in the Second World War. Arles's father Eugene W. Greene, his uncle William Edwin McDavid and friend Ed Gallbreath, Jr., all served some 60 years ago.

Ed Galbreath, Jr., a friend of Arles's family, joined the Air Force in February 1944, during his senior year of high school. He flew 23½ missions as a gunman, operated a VHF radio, and worked the radar jammers. He survived four crashes. In his last crash, out of a B-24 Tiger Shark, he landed in Berlin where he was taken prisoner. He spent months in confinement with some 6,000 other prisoners of war until he was liberated by the Russian Army. For his bravery, Sergeant Galbreath received many awards, including the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Purple Heart, the P.O.W. Medal, and the Parachute Club Medal. His understanding of those prisons shaped his many future contributions to his community of Goodlettsville, TN.

In October of 1943, Arles's uncle, PVT William Edwin McDavid, left Moccasin Gap, Virginia, to serve in the 38th Infantry Division. Private McDavid was just 18 years old when he served in Normandy, the Rhineland, the Ardennes, and northern France. While fighting in the Battle of the Bulge on New Year's Eve of 1944, McDavid suffered frost-bitten hands that ended his infantry

career. Private McDavid's service and bravery was recognized with the award of a European-African Theatre Ribbon with four Bronze Battle Stars, a Bronze Star Medal, and a Purple Heart.

Arles's father, Eugene Greene, began his career with the U.S. Army in July 1944. The oldest of 12 children, he enlisted at 18 years old with the Hancock County Draft Board. He served with the U.S. Army infantry, 2nd Division, 9th Regiment that assisted in the liberation of Nazi concentration camps in the spring of 1945. Greene and his unit liberated the death camps at Dachau. He remembers finding only 25 people alive at the sub-camp where he shot a lock off a prison gate setting them free. Those prisoners rushed to drink the milk of Holstein cattle pastured nearby.

Eugene met General Patton shortly before his death. He says of Patton, "He was over there to get a job done, and that's what he did." Eugene Greene returned with many memories of the war. Most of these he buried in the fields of his Tennessee farm, but some lived on—the faith he had in his fellow soldiers, in his family, and in God.

I have had a lot to say about the importance of teaching American history and civics to help our children grow up understanding what it means to be an American. The teacher in me thinks of this tribute as an assignment. I hope when we gather around our holiday tables this season we pause to take stock, like Arles did, to answer what our own families have contributed to America's history and to answering the question of what it means to be an American.

Thank you for allowing me to honor my friend Arles Greene and his family.

#### TRIBUTE TO MS. GLORIA MARTIN

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, today I honor Ms. Gloria Martin, a legal assistant to the Battalion Commander, 1st Battalion, 210th Aviation Regiment, Fort Rucker, AL. Ms. Martin was hired at Fort Rucker in January of 1980. She has 24 years of exemplary and dedicated service to the United States Army and Fort Rucker.

This morning, the Army will honor Ms. Martin with the Army Outstanding Employee of the Year with a Disability Award. Later today, Ms. Martin will be honored by the Department of Defense as the Army's recipient of the DoD Outstanding Disabled Employee of the Year Award. Ms. Martin will also be honored with the Meritorious Civilian Service Award.

Ms. Martin was born on August 13, 1955, to Paul and Mallie Martin in Opp, AL. Ms. Martin has five brothers and sisters, including her twin sister Gladys. While Gladys was born healthy, Gloria suffered from serious abnormalities that she has battled her entire life. The debilitating effects of scoliosis, neurofibromatosis and osteoporosis required a series of major back surgeries, the first when Gloria was 5 years old

making her childhood very difficult. Through all the surgeries and many months of recovery and therapy, Gloria showed great courage and strength by working extremely hard to complete her school work to remain with her peers. She completed elementary school on time, and she also completed high school on time. She went on to complete a business course as a member of the Dean's List at Douglas MacArthur Technical College and worked two jobs before being hired at Fort Rucker.

Gloria faced another major back surgery in 1992 and, despite complications that required a prolonged absence, she returned to her job at Fort Rucker with the same fierce determination and strength of will that had made her such a popular and respected colleague with so many of her fellow employees. A back injury in 2000 that left her with a compression fracture in her middle back did not deter Gloria from continuing to perform her duties from home as best she could. But Gloria returned to work at Fort Rucker with the help of a walker and cane even though she was in constant, often severe, pain.

Gloria Martin's tenacious and courageous service to the Army and Fort Rucker is being very rightly rewarded. She has a wonderfully supportive family, and she also loves her church, the First Assembly of God in Kinston, AL. She has held many leadership positions in her church and participates in community service activities. In a recent Army Flier article, Ms. Martin put her experience in perspective when she said, "I think it's made me a stronger person because I grew up going to the Hospital and to doctor appointments a lot. I feel like it has strengthened my faith because when you have a disability, you have to depend more on God. My faith gives me confidence in my abilities. It gives me the strength to get up in the morning. I know that my faith in God and His care has enabled me to keep working."

Gloria Martin is a very special lady, and I am very proud to join the Army and Department of Defense in honoring her tremendous accomplishments and extraordinary service to our military. She is a role model for us all. She is an example for so many others with disabilities and a true testament to what faith and personal courage can accomplish. She has touched many lives, and I thank her today for her service.

#### KEITH KIDD

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, over the Thanksgiving weekend, I received a letter from a State Department employee from Dallas, Keith Kidd, who left his previous job to serve in Afghanistan in 2003 and then in Iraq early this year. As a representative from the U.S. Embassy to Iraq, he worked with military and civilian leaders from the Western Al Anbar Province. I want to share his Thanksgiving

message to his friends and family because he represents the best of America and his letter reflects the positive spirit that is so representative of our country. He has volunteered for the mission to stabilize Iraq and help the Iraqi people have the freedom and democracy that every human being deserves. I hope this letter makes every American proud of the thousands of U.S. men and women, both military and civilian, serving bravely overseas during the holidays.

His letter reads as follows:

Greetings from Ramadi.

As Thanksgiving draws near, I found it fitting to tally my blessings. As it turns out, I have oodles of them.

I'm thankful that I'm alive. All of the attempts on my life have failed. I realize I'm wrecking some poor terrorist's batting average, but that's just tough. I'm thankful for the guys on my Personal Security Detail who help ensure those attempts keep failing. I'm thankful for my health. The dust storms are bad for my eyes, nose, throat and lungs so I cry, sneeze and cough but it could be much worse. Much worse.

I'm thankful for the Dining Facility. The grub is not all that good but it sure beats MREs. The food is usually warm. Sometimes it's even hot. We often go weeks without fresh vegetables, but we enjoy them when we have them. I'm thankful for Coke. I'm not a coffee consumer so that crimson-colored can of carbonated cola contains the caffeine I crave when I work to the wee hours all week.

I'm thankful for the military postal system. It eventually delivers the dusty, bashed, mangled boxes that contain the vital vittles, the essential sundries and the other simple pleasures of home that folks have sent my way.

I'm thankful for fall. It has been over a month since the mercury was measured in triple digits. I'm thankful for cool evenings. I'm thankful for full moons, bright stars and desert sunsets. I'm thankful that I get to see that big orange orb drop below the horizon every day. The only thing worse than having a bad day is not making it to the end.

I'm thankful for the shipping container that acts as my desert abode. It's modest but it's higher class than the plywood box I called home in Afghanistan. I'm thankful for showers. Standing under a gentle cascade of water with a bar of soap in hand is far superior to baby-wipe style bathing.

I'm thankful for electricity. It powers the window unit air conditioner that keeps me from melting and the computer that makes it possible for me to communicate with you. Sometimes we don't have any of these things but it's nice when we do.

I'm thankful for armored cars. They have saved my life more than once. I'm thankful for ballistic vests. They protect me from flying projectiles when I'm in town. I'm thankful for sandbags. They protect me from flying projectiles when I'm at home. I'm thankful for Mylar. It's a plastic coating on my windows that prevents the glass from shattering into thousands of pieces when flying projectiles break through it. I'm thankful for dumb luck. I suspect it has saved my life more times than I will ever know. I'm thankful I was not in my tin home when the rocket exploded over it and blew a 3" x 5" hole in the roof right over my desk and chair where I would ordinarily have been sitting. (No sandbags or Mylar on the roof—a deficiency we have oft noted.) I'm thankful for Mother Nature's sense of humor. I had not seen rain in six months but it rained that night.

I'm thankful for the soldiers and marines who fight our enemies on the ground and I'm