

etc.). Disengagement would enhance the profile of the PLO/PA, a lethal threat to the Hashemite regime and a chief ally of radical regimes in the Mideast and beyond. PLO-Hashemite relations have been a classic case of zero-sumgame: The stronger the PLO the weaker the Hashemites. The rise of the PLO/PA has emboldened subversive anti-U.S. terrorists in Jordan and in the Gulf area.

8. Strengthening Anti-U.S. Mideast Regimes. Disengagement would buttress the PLO/PA, which has been a sustained ally of the Saddam and bin Laden forces, of Khomeini and his successors in Iran, of the terrorist regime in Sudan and other anti-U.S. Mideast regimes. A stronger PA would be a liability—to the U.S.—in the U.N. and in the context of Clash of Civilizations.

9. Inigorating Mideast Profile of U.S. Global Rivals. The strengthening of the PLO/PA would facilitate the road to a re-assertive Russia in the Mideast. It would improve the strategic posture of China and North Korea in the region, at the expense of vital U.S. concerns, including U.S. standard of living.

10. Ignoring Plight of Christians. The 1995 disengagement from Bethlehem and Beit Jallah has accelerated the flight of Christians, caused by PLO/PA oppression and desecration of churches.

11. Setback to Mideast Democratization. Disengagement would promote the most corrupt and repressive Arab regime in the Mideast, rewarding a terrorist regime, thus dealing a blow to moderate Palestinians.

12. Undermining Israel-Egypt Peace. The 1979 peace treaty disengaged Israeli and Egyptian military forces from one another. The Plan of Disengagement would reengage them in a terror-ridden area, thus fueling unintentional and intentional confrontations. It could drag the U.S. unnecessarily into such conflict. Egypt has facilitated/tolerated the smuggling of terror hardware, missiles and mortars into Gaza. It has undermined U.S. interests in Africa, in the Red Sea and in the U.N., and it has spearheaded anti-Jewish Arab/Palestinian hate education (PA hate education employs Egyptian school text books).

13. PLO's Track Record of Inter-Arab Treachery. Abu Mazen Abu Ala', Inc. fled Egypt (late 1950s) for subversive activities. They escaped Syria (1966) for betraying their hosts. They were expelled from Jordan for attempting to topple the Hashemite regimes via terrorism. They exacerbated a series of civil wars in Lebanon since 1975. They spearheaded Saddam's invasion of Kuwait (1990), which hosted them since the 1950s. Their systematic violent violation of the 1993 Oslo Accords have been consistent with their inter-Arab back-stabbing. Disengagement would be viewed—by the PLO/PA as a reward to treachery, which would vindicate the aforementioned track record.

HONORING ARMY PRIVATE FIRST
CLASS JOHN HAROLD BERG

HON. DONALD A. MANZULLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Speaker, last month, I had the honor and privilege of attending the annual Memorial Day Vietnam Wall observance, in which one of my constituents and friends, the late Army PFC John Harold Berg of Rockford, Illinois, was honored for his service to our country. John was gravely injured in

Vietnam, but he passed up his 100 percent disability status when he returned because he wanted to help others. Despite a host of serious medical issues, John served as a veterans representative for 25 years at the Illinois Department of Employment Security before he died in 2003 from cancer caused by shrapnel lodged in his brain from his Vietnam injury. On Memorial Day, I sat with John's widow, Lynn, and several of John's friends as his name was one of just four this year officially added to the Vietnam Wall. It was a remarkable day for a remarkable man. I have attached a newspaper article written by Judy Emerson of the Rockford Register Star that describes John's contributions and his character perfectly:

ADDING SOLDIERS TO THE WALL

One hundred years from now, someone will read the name "John H. Berg" cut into black granite on The Wall in Washington, D.C., and they will assume he died in Vietnam in the spring of 1968. Berg was fatally wounded April 7, 1968, in combat near Khe Sahn, but it took him 37½ years to die. When he did, on Oct. 10, 2003, it was in his rural Rockford home surrounded by family. But the Vietnam War took his life, just as surely as if he had died that spring day long ago as he lay in the dirt with blood streaming from the hole in his skull. Medics postponed his death that day. Military doctors patched him up as well as they could and sent him home to Rockford with a plate covering the hole in his skull and shrapnel still embedded in his brain.

He dragged his left leg, and his left hand was useless. He slurred his words. Back in Rockford, he couldn't find a job. A talented musician, he was bitterly disappointed that he couldn't play piano, organ, violin and guitar, as he once did. But he went to college. He re-learned how to play his instruments with only his right hand and arm. He sought the company of other Vietnam veterans who understood the struggle. He found a job that gave him purpose. For 25 years, he was a veterans representative at the Illinois Department of Employment Security. Over the years, he helped thousands of veterans find jobs and get benefits to which they were entitled. Many were disabled, as he was.

In 2002, doctors found the tumor growing under the plate in Berg's head. His widow, Lynn Berg, said doctors found shrapnel when they tried to carve away the tumor and buy her husband a little more time. Even fighting the relentless growth of a malignant tumor, Berg continued to work. He lived longer than anybody expected.

When he died, his buddies at VietNow, which he'd helped to start, began the process to have his name added to The Wall, the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. The Department of Defense concluded that Berg's fatal wound was incurred in Vietnam in 1968 and that he qualified to have his name listed on the memorial. And so, Berg's name was carved on The Wall earlier this month. A small diamond after the name signifies a confirmed combat death. His name was placed as close as possible to those of other soldiers who suffered their fatal injuries on the same day. The thinking is that they should be together. His father, 86-year-old Harold John Berg, said that the memorial was waiting for his son, despite the 37½-year reprieve from death. "We saw the wall once," the elder Berg said. "And now we go the rest of the way. He's on it." John H. Berg of Rockford was fatally wounded in Vietnam April 7, 1968. He died Oct. 10, 2003. What he did in between is the story.

TALENTED BOY

Harold Berg was a machinist and inspector who retired from Camcar years ago. His health is poor but his memory and spirits are good. His wife, 80-year-old Vergene, has Alzheimer's disease. They spend their days in side-by-side hospital beds in the Cherry Valley home of their daughter Hilary Belcher, who cares for them. Her husband, Nick, and 9-year-old daughter, Chenoa, help.

Young John Berg wanted to be a musician. His mother was a long-time organist for their church, and her firstborn son also played the organ, as well as piano, violin and guitar. A 1965 graduate of East High School, John took some classes at Rock Valley College until he was drafted in the summer of 1967. "We tried to talk him into going into the Air Force, but he thought he'd get this over with in two years," his dad said. By January 1968, 20-year-old John was in Vietnam. His early letters home to his parents, three younger sisters and a brother revealed a diminishing innocence as reality and the futility of the mission sank in. "I only hope this year goes fast and I come back in one piece," he wrote two weeks before his injury.

His wife, Lynn, said John could remember what happened during the firefight on April 7, 1968, up until he was wounded. He was feeding an ammunition belt into a machine gun being fired by another soldier when he turned to dive for cover from incoming mortar. It's still unclear whether he was shot in the head or hit by shrapnel or both. He was unconscious or semiconscious for weeks. The Western Union telegram arrived early one weekday morning as Harold Berg was getting ready for work. "Deep regret . . . very seriously ill list . . . penetrating fragment wound to the head." Vergene couldn't stop crying. Hilary Belcher, who's 15 years younger than John, doesn't remember too much about the time, except that her parents were distraught.

The telegrams kept coming with updates on her brother's condition, and after John was transferred to a hospital in Denver, Colo., the family drove out there to see him. "I remember walking down a long hallway and doorway after doorway, there were all these men with holes in their heads, just like John," Belcher said. "We took him out for a while. You could hardly understand him when he talked." Months later, when he came home, she said, "I ran out to him saying 'John's home! John's home!' He screamed. He thought I was going to knock him down. "I used to run to him and he'd throw me up in the air." There was plenty of trauma to go around.

"Those first eight years, he was very angry," Belcher said. "When you get a head injury, it changes your whole personality." John was bitter that he couldn't play his instruments. His disability was obvious, and nobody would hire him. "It took him years to find a job. He even applied to a gas station to pump gas, but they told him, 'You only have one hand,'" Belcher said. He decided to go back to Rock Valley College. There, he met Reuben Johnson, dean of community services and the producer and founder of Starlight Theatre. Johnson helped Berg learn to play the piano, organ, guitar and violin with one hand.

It was a turning point, as was the job Berg landed in July 1977 as a veterans representative at the Illinois Department of Employment Security. He was good at it, said Jack

Snyder, who also is a disabled Vietnam veteran. The two men worked together at the department for close to 25 years. "I've never seen a person give so much heart and caring to his job as John did," Snyder said. "We had guys coming in who were basically homeless. He would take them home until they got on their feet. "I've seen him cry at his desk over some of these situations, over the misuse and abuse the military has given some of these people."

Berg often referred clients to the Winnebago County Veterans Assistance office in Memorial Hall. Herbert L. Crenshaw, also a Vietnam veteran, works there. He and Berg worked together to get help for thousands of vets over the years, he said. "He worked with this office to get veterans back on their feet, to get jobs, get assistance," Crenshaw said. "He had walked in their shoes. He had the same difficulties and disabilities they had."

Berg, like many of his clients, had a full disability designation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. "He could have sat home and drawn a disability," Crenshaw said. "He chose to work." Berg had a network that he could use to get practical assistance for veterans and offer them moral support. He helped found VietNow, a support group for Vietnam veterans that started in Rockford and then became a national organization. It still thrives.

Nick Parnello, one of the original VietNow members and now president of the Vietnam Veterans Honor Society, said John was "the only guy that always showed up" at the early meetings. "Some of the guys felt that we should give up because there were so few of us back then," Parnello said. "But if John could show up in his disabled condition, it was an inspiration to all of us. "Everybody he came in contact with was changed because of his commitment to them."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

In November 1991, Berg met Lynn Walquist of Rockford. Her daughter and son-in-law, who knew Berg through mutual acquaintances in the veterans circle, fixed them up. "I've got four kids—two in college—and all these animals," recalled Lynn, who's always had a cat and at least one dog. "What's wrong with him?"

The kids always had rock music blaring when Berg came to pick her up for a date. "He said, 'Do you ever listen to classical music?'" she said, she didn't. He taught her to love it as he did. Lynn's scrapbook holds tickets from concerts they attended at the Lyric Opera in Chicago and elsewhere. By then, Berg could make music on the piano and other instruments with one hand. He sang with the Rock Valley Chorale and with a Mendelssohn Club group. They fell in love and were married April 25, 1992. "It was the best day of our lives," Lynn Berg said. "He told me: 'I'll never say no to you,' and he kept his promise."

Over the years they attended VietNow conventions and events. She became active as an "associate," which is what veterans' spouses are called in the group. "He always said that he felt very fortunate. He was only in Vietnam for three months," Lynn Berg said. "The others who had been there longer were the ones who came back with so many problems." His friends became her friends. Her children and grandchildren were his.

He's smiling in every picture his wife has in her numerous photo albums. But it would be a mistake to say Berg's transformation from an angry young man to a person with purpose and a zest for living was easy, said his sister, Hilary Belcher. "He had to grow into a new personality and lifestyle and everything," Belcher said. "He was gung-ho when he went into the service, and then he lost it and he got angry. "But he got through it, and his gung ho came back."

Retired U.S. Army Col. Fremont Piercefield knew Berg well from their mutual work in various organizations, including the VFW, Disabled American Veterans and the Winnebago County Veterans Association. "He was the gentlest, kindest man," the colonel said. "He was there when you expected him and when you needed him." He was the same way on the home front, his wife said. He took care of the house and the cars and the lawn, but he also taught her how to do those things. She needs to know them now that he's gone.

He would see a need and answer it before other people noticed, she said. For instance, he was concerned that one of her daughters was in danger walking from the library back to her dorm at Northern Illinois University after using a computer late at night. He bought her a computer for her room.

There were health issues over the years. Berg took medication to deal with headaches and seizures that came with the head injury. He learned to compensate for the partial paralysis of his left side and minimized the limp. He never regained use of his left hand. It looked just as it did when he was 20 years old, his wife and sister said, as if it had been frozen in time the day he was injured.

THE END OF SOMETHING

In May of 2002, Berg began having excruciating, debilitating headaches and more frequent seizures, his wife said. Brain scans showed bright spots of shrapnel but the brain tumor was not detected for a couple of months. He had surgery, but the tumor was malignant, and doctors indicated it was just a matter of time. Lynn Berg remembers one doctor predicting John had about nine months. He exceeded that by about seven months. VietNow treasurer and good friend Darrell Gilgan visited Berg as he was recuperating from the surgery in a Beloit nursing home.

Berg's radio was missing one day and Gilgan asked him about it. "He gave it to the guy in the next bed, a B-17 pilot during World War II," Gilgan said. "He was like that." Berg continued to work as much as he could, but the tumor was growing again and the pain was awful, his wife said. During his last months, she cared for him at their home, with help from the Northern Illinois Hospice Association. He died Oct. 10, 2003. A few months later, Gilgan began the paperwork necessary to have Berg considered for addition to the Vietnam Memorial. The key element in Berg's favor was that the Department of Veterans Affairs had determined that his death was a result of the combat injury in 1968.

Gilgan sent a letter to U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo, R-Egan, who sent it through the proper military channels. "I had known John for years," said Manzullo, who will sit with Berg's family at a Memorial Day ceremony Monday at The Wall. "Here is a guy who could have given up, but he refused to accept the fact that people told him he was 100 percent disabled. "He went to work to serve as a witness and an example to people who are severely disabled."

Some friends and family have traveled from the Rockford area to join Lynn Berg at the ceremony, which will include a special remembrance for her husband and three other veterans whose names have been added on The Wall. John Berg's parents are not well enough to go. His dad wishes he could, though. "It's an end to something, I guess," Harold Berg said. "He just got an extension on his death." That sad morning when the telegram came so many years ago and the day his son died all those years later occupy the same place of grief in his heart. "We hoped the day would never come," his dad said, "but then we found out he wasn't going to make it, after all."

HUMAN RIGHTS IN VIETNAM

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 20, 2005

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today in the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and Africa, I chaired a timely and critical hearing that examined the government of Vietnam's respect for human rights and religious freedom.

Our witnesses included Ms. Nina Shea, Vice Chair, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom; Ms. Minky Worden, Media Director, Human Rights Watch; Ms. Helen Ngo, Chairwoman Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam; Dr. Nguyen Than, Executive Director, Boat People S.O.S.; Mr. Vo Van Ai, President, Vietnam Committee on Human Rights; Mr. Y Khim Nie, Executive Director, Montagnard Human Rights Organization. The excellent testimony these witnesses provided can be found online (http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/)

Before I report on the human rights crisis in Vietnam, let me say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I remain deeply concerned about obtaining a full, thorough and responsible accounting of the remaining American MIAs from the Vietnam conflict. As my colleagues know well, of the 2,583 POW/MIAs who were unaccounted for—Vietnam, 1,921; Laos, 569; Cambodia, 83; and China, 10—just under 1,400 remain unaccounted for in Vietnam. While the joint POW/MIA accounting command normally conducts four joint field activities per year in Vietnam, I remain deeply concerned that the government of Vietnam could be more forthcoming and transparent in providing the fullest accounting. It is our sacred duty to the families of the missing that we never forget and never cease our pursuit until we achieve the fullest possible accounting of our MIAs.

Today's hearing on human rights abuses in Vietnam must be reviewed in the context of the official visit this week to Washington by Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai. Designed to mark 10 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam, the visit is the highest-level since the end of the Vietnam War. Khai will meet with President Bush and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, conclude intelligence agreements on terrorism and transnational crime, as well as begin IMET military cooperation, meet with Microsoft chairman Bill Gates, and ring the bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Vietnam hopes to gain U.S. support to join the World Trade Organization this year. Trade with the United States has exploded in the past decade, from \$1.5 billion to \$6.4 billion in 2004. Vietnamese exports to the United States have also jumped from \$800 million in 2001 to \$5 billion last year.

An outside observer looking at all of this activity would in all likelihood conclude that Vietnam is a close business and political partner of the United States in Asia. And that observer, if asked, would also likely deduce that in order to cooperate so closely, Vietnam must also share the core values of the United States that make our country great. Values such as the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, and the protection of religious freedom, free speech, and the rights of minorities.