

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for morning business within which Senators may be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 30 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

ARMY CAPTAIN DENNIS L. PINTOR

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, on October 11, 2004, the Lima, OH, newspaper received an e-mail that said the following:

Greetings, My name is Captain Dennis Pintor . . . I was born and raised in Lima and lived there until I enlisted in the Army in 1992. I am currently requesting the help of the citizens of Lima to assist in our efforts here in Baghdad. School here has just begun session and many of the students need supplies . . . I tell you it makes a difference in the kids and my soldiers. I appreciate any assistance . . . the people of Lima can offer. Respectfully—Captain Dennis Pintor.

Tragically, that same newspaper reported the captain's death just a few days later. He was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near his patrol vehicle in Baghdad.

At the news of his death, family friend Lillian Abelita remembered that Dennis was "one of a kind" and that he touched thousands of lives. She noted that Dennis's "last wish was for the Iraqi children." "It wasn't even for himself," she said. The focus of his life had always been giving all that he had for others.

Dennis Pintor was born and raised in Lima by loving parents, Bert and Ellen Pintor. He was the big brother whom siblings Bob, Sara, and Diana looked up to.

Dennis attended Elida High School, where he belonged to several teams and clubs. He played soccer and tennis, was on the yearbook staff, and started the Red Knees Club for his fellow basketball players who didn't get much playing time. John Hullinger, a teammate, remembered that "Dennis was not one to complain about sitting on the bench. He made the most of it and had fun with it."

Dennis made the most of everything, including his academic studies. Dennis wanted to learn. Alan Chum, a guidance counselor at Elida High School, had Dennis in several math classes. He recalled that Dennis was an "inquisitive" student who would "bring an energy that kept the class going."

Teachers wanted Dennis in their classrooms. Allen emphasized that "[Dennis] had a knack for being able to answer questions and ask good, appropriate questions. He was just a good kid—great to have in class."

Dennis excelled academically and earned an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point where he trained to be an engineer. He graduated in 1998 and then went on to complete Army Ranger School. Dennis quickly became a well-respected superior who was known for putting his men first.

Dennis served as a peacekeeper in Kosovo—an assignment that suited his desire to help those who needed it most. In 2002, Dennis was assigned as Company Commander of Bravo Company, 20th Engineer Battalion, based in Fort Hood, TX.

Dennis was Army through and through. One of Ellen Pintor's favorite memories of her son is when he would visit her classroom at North Middle School on Veterans Day. He would playfully give the kids orders and assign platoon leaders. Dennis would order the kids to stand in line and if they wouldn't do what he said quickly enough, he would command: "Drop and give me five!" Simultaneously, Dennis would drop to the floor and do push-ups with the kids.

While he was in the Army, Dennis was lucky enough to meet the love of his life—Stacy—and married her in 2000. The two were meant for each other. Stacy called her husband, "a glimpse of heaven." She said that "it was love that struck our souls. Individually we were strong, but together we were powerful." They were blessed with a baby girl, whom they named Rhea.

Being together with his wife and daughter was so very important to Dennis. However, he also felt a great sense of duty to his fellow soldiers and to his Nation. His unit was called for deployment to Iraq in March 2004. Although it was difficult to leave his family, Dennis had a job to do. While overseas, Dennis was in charge of rebuilding and securing the safety of several schools in Baghdad. Dennis realized that Iraqi children needed help—and they needed supplies. He enlisted the help of those in his hometown of Lima to give what they could. As he had so many times before, Dennis had the needs of others foremost in his mind.

CPT Jay Wisham, a member of Dennis's unit, noted that he was not surprised Dennis was trying to secure school supplies for the Iraqi children. He said this about Dennis:

He was just a very good guy all the way around. He firmly believed in what we were doing over there. All he wanted to do was make things better for whomever's life he touched.

Indeed, Dennis touched many lives.

After his service, Dennis wanted to return to West Point as a professor. David Garrison said this about his nephew:

[Dennis] refused to take the easy way through life. As an officer, he was determined to receive all the tough training. Unfortunately, America's future cadets will never have the opportunity to learn what this West Point hero might have taught.

Although Dennis will never teach those West Point cadets in the class-

room, he will teach them through his legacy. He will teach them through the love he had for his family and through the lives of those Iraqi children, who now have the opportunity to go to school.

At the memorial service following Dennis's death, his uncle David explained that "was loved so strongly by so many because he loved so selflessly." The Reverend Henry Sattler, who married Dennis and Stacy, noted that Dennis "knew in the career he'd chosen that he may be asked to lay down his life for his friends . . . and he said yes."

CPT Dennis Pintor was a selfless man. Thanks to his efforts, more than 30 boxes of school supplies were sent to Iraq.

Thanks to his efforts, hundreds of Iraqi children have a chance for a better life.

Thanks to his efforts, the Iraqi people have a chance for freedom.

My wife Fran and I keep Dennis's wife and daughter and his parents and siblings in our thoughts and in our prayers.

ARMY SERGEANT BENJAMIN BISKIE

Mr. President, today I remember and pay tribute to a young man from Vermillion, OH, who gave his life for our freedom and for the freedom of the people of Iraq.

Army Sgt Benjamin Biskie gave the ultimate sacrifice—his last true measure of devotion—on Christmas Eve, 2003. His vehicle struck an improvised explosive device near Samarra, Iraq. He was 27 years old.

Ben was born and raised in Arizona with his two sisters, Andrea and Darlene. He attended Tucson Junior Academy until he moved with his mother, Della, to Ohio in 1993. There, he graduated from Vermillion High School one year later. Following graduation, Ben enlisted in the Army, but not before he met his future wife, Marcie, that summer while working at Cedar Point amusement park. The two quickly fell in love and were married.

Although Ben was proud to serve in the U.S. Army, his crowning achievement was the birth of his son Benjamin, Jr. Ben's Army comrades remember how he constantly told stories about his son.

Ben trained at Fort Leonard Wood, MO, where he, Marcie, and Ben, Jr. made their home. Ben, Sr. would eventually serve one year in South Korea before he was sent to the Middle East.

Though Ben did not want to leave his young family, he did not hesitate when he and the rest of the 5th Engineer Battalion, 1st Engineer Brigade were called to serve in Iraq in April 2003. The men of the "Fighting Fifth" were attached to the 4th Infantry Division and were tasked with laying roads and bridges for the Division's advancement. Following the successful completion of that mission, Ben and the rest of the Battalion aided the reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

Ben believed in the work he was doing to rebuild the lives of Iraqi people. Like the dreams he had for his own son, Ben knew that his work would give hope for a promising future to so many Iraqi children—hope that had not previously existed.

As Fort Leonard Wood Chaplain Gregory Tyree said at the memorial service in Ben's honor:

Maybe years from now . . . a person who today is but a child in Iraq will look back through the pages of his life and remember a soldier in a desert-colored uniform who cared enough to help rebuild his school and came with a box of school supplies. And maybe, just maybe, he will offer a word of thanks for Sergeant Ben Biskie and the gift of freedom he died to give him.

On an Internet website honoring our Nation's fallen service men and women, Ben Biskie's sister-in-law Ginger tried her best to express her feelings and her gratitude. She wrote the following:

Ben—you are always on my mind. I've been thinking about you a lot lately and everything that I wish I could say to you. Most importantly of all is thank you. Thank you, Ben, for fighting for our freedom. Thank you, Ben, for making my sister so happy and for giving me the greatest nephew anyone could ask for. Thank you, Ben, for all of the lessons you have taught me, even if I didn't see the entirety of them until after you were taken from us. Thank you, Ben, for coming to visit me in my dreams on days when you know I need you the most. You are a true hero who will never be forgotten.

Indeed, we will always remember Benjamin Biskie. He was a devoted husband, a doting father, and a selfless soldier, who dedicated his life to helping people he did not know while protecting those he loved at home. On that Christmas Eve in 2003, our Nation lost a great man.

I would like to close with the words of Ben's wife, Marcie. Knowing how much her husband loved her and their son, she said the following:

I don't know where our lives will take us now, but I know that wherever that may be, we'll have an angel following, keeping an eye out for his little boy. [Ben] was a true hero.

Sgt Benjamin Biskie will live on in the hearts and minds of all those who knew him. His family remains in our thoughts and prayers.

MARINE LANCE CORPORAL MICHAEL J. SMITH, JR.

Mr. President, I today pay tribute to a fellow Ohioan and true American hero. Marine LCpl Michael Smith, Jr., was killed on April 17, 2004, in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Michael was coming to the aid of his Sergeant who had been shot. Michael was just 21 years-old.

In his brief 21 years on this earth, Michael Smith, Jr., touched countless lives. Described as outgoing and personable, Michael's grandmother Alice once said that her grandson could "walk into a room and no one was a stranger to him." Everyone loved him.

Michael spent his youth crossing the Ohio River between Wellsburg, WV, where his father lived, and Wintersville, OH, where his mother resided. Known as the "funny little red-headed kid," Michael and his cousin

were partners in crime who loved to play pranks and revel in what many called their "offbeat sense of humor." Though they loved to play tricks on people, cousin, Amy White, noted that Michael was a "really sweet kid. He was the kind of kid who would do anything for you."

Michael would carry this reputation throughout his life. He attended Brooke High School in Wellsburg, where he was a diligent student, gifted athlete, and an active participant in school clubs—including one tasked with discouraging fellow teens from using drugs and alcohol. On the high school football team, Michael earned the nickname "All-Purpose Smitty" because he could play any position. Michael was also a volunteer firefighter for the Bethany Pike Fire Department in West Virginia, which he formally joined when he was 18 years-old.

Ernestein Gorby, a guidance counselor at the high school, once remarked that "[Michael] was a very pleasant young man—kind of what I would call the 'solid citizen,' the person who you'd want to be your next-door neighbor. He was reliable. He was serious about school."

After high school, Michael wanted to take the next step and help his country. When he was 17, he urged his mother, Marianne, to support his decision to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps. Though she was hesitant, Marianne knew that her son would follow his own path. And so, on February 9, 2001, Michael enlisted. Marianne instantly found it ironic that her freckled red-headed son was stationed at sunny Twentynine Palms, CA, with the rest of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

Michael was first deployed to Kuwait and then Iraq in January 2003, and was part of the original advance on Baghdad. He then returned to the United States in September 2003, to do something he had been planning for almost a year—and that was to marry Alicia, his high school sweetheart.

Alicia and Michael had been friends since the fifth grade. That friendship eventually grew into a romance, and the two were married on October 11, 2003. Alicia described her husband as an incredible man and a wonderful father to her young daughter Elizabeth. "He's always been my hero," she said, "[and] an amazing husband, my best friend, and a remarkable daddy to Elizabeth."

In February 2004, Michael was called back to Iraq. Shortly after being redeployed, Alicia called with the news that she was pregnant. Tragically, Michael never had the chance to meet his son, who was born on October 16, 2004, 6 months after Michael's death. One day before he died, Michael was able to talk to Alicia via satellite phone. Alicia said that "he just called to tell me he loved me with all his heart and soul."

Michael was loved by all those who met him. When he died, the entire community felt the loss. As he attempted

to describe his son to reporters, Michael's dad, Michael Smith, Sr., noted that "there's not enough tape in the cameras or time in the world [to do that]."

The service for LCpl Michael Smith was held at Grace Lutheran Church in Steubenville, OH—the same church where Michael was baptized, confirmed, and married. Church members remember Michael as a moral guide—"a man who inspired them with laughter, love, and quiet leadership." Pastor Bethel Bateson recalls that on Michael's last military leave, he walked through the church and thanked everyone for their prayers, their letters, and their packages.

Those whom Michael thanked that day came back to the church to say goodbye. At the service held in Michael's honor, Pastor Bateson commented that it was the most difficult service over which she had ever presided, "because that beautiful red-haired boy playing under the pews grew up to be an incredible man." She went to say that "even though he was only 21, a lot of us really looked up to him. . . . He was so strong—physically strong—but so tender. He had a tremendous capacity for love."

I would like to close my remarks with the words of Marine Sgt Jason Long, who served as Michael's squadron leader. Following Michael's death, Sergeant Long wrote the following on an Internet tribute:

My heart goes out to Michael's family. I send my deepest regrets. I could always count on [Michael] to get the job done if ever I wasn't around. He was a great man and Marine and an exceptional artist, as well. He showed great bravery in the face of the enemy. I only wish I was there with him to keep him out of danger. I could always count on him to give me a laugh when times were tough. We will meet again someday, my fellow Marine.

Mr. President, I know that Michael's fellow Marines and his family will forever cherish the memory of their comrade, son, brother, husband, and father. His tremendous capacity for love shaped their lives. We will never forget him.

LUKE PETRIK

Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor this afternoon to pay tribute to a remarkable young man who died in defense of freedom. Luke Adam Petrik of Conneaut, OH, was killed on April 21, 2005, when his helicopter was shot down a few miles north of Baghdad, Iraq. He was 24 years old.

Luke was one of those special and courageous individuals, who spent his life defending others. At the time of his death, he was working for a private security company to provide protection to American diplomats in Iraq. Previously, he had served as a decorated Army Ranger, with tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan. After his work in security, Luke had hopes of rejoining the military as a Navy SEAL. Luke knew the risks and accepted the challenges of this life.

Born on April 1, 1981, in Ohio, Luke knew from a young age that he wanted

to live a life of adventure. As a young boy, he joined the Boy Scouts. Luke's Scout leader, and the man who would later serve as his high school principal, John Posila, remembers Luke as "an exceptional kid and very, very intelligent. From the time Luke was in Scouting, he had an interest in the military."

In every aspect of his life, Luke sought out new experiences. His boyhood friend, Josh Brooks, said that "you would get a million stories with Luke. Every time you hung out with him, there would be some kind of story." Along with memorable stories, spending time with Luke also meant that much laughter would ensue. Luke had a great sense of humor, according to everybody who knew him. Friends contend that there was no one who told worse jokes. He told jokes that were so bad, according to his friends, that you couldn't help but crack up. Although he was everything that you would expect from a future Army Ranger—tough, disciplined, smart, and courageous—he was also riotously funny.

Throughout his time at Conneaut High School, Luke knew that he wanted to serve in the military on the front lines. Upon graduation in 1999, he immediately enlisted in the Army and trained to join that elite fighting force, the Army Rangers. Given his discipline and desire, it is no surprise that he was successful. As a paratrooper in the 3rd Ranger Battalion, Luke joined in the hunt for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan.

Luke's experience with the Rangers was a perfect opportunity for him to demonstrate his extraordinary bravery and toughness—toughness that was legendary among his family and friends. Luke's stepfather, Eldridge Smith, remembers a remarkable story. While parachuting for a mission, Luke broke two bones in his foot. He was slated to be airlifted to a medical hospital in Germany for treatment. However, just before the plane was scheduled to leave with him, he walked away and hitchhiked across three countries to rejoin his company. You see, Luke felt a profound sense of duty and—broken foot or not—he would never abandon his mission or his men.

Luke's experience in the military also revealed the way he lived his whole life, which was by a personal code of honor. Josh Brooks remembers his friend as a man of principle. On two separate occasions, Luke turned down—yes, turned down—a Purple Heart, saying he didn't deserve the award. Josh says that both that broken foot and Iraqi shrapnel he later took in his body would qualify him for the honor. But for Luke it was simple. Josh recalled, "He didn't feel that he earned [the medals]. He did things his own way." Luke respected the medals and what they symbolized enough to refuse them.

After having served two tours of duty in both Iraq and Afghanistan, Luke left the military in late 2003. After a brief

period doing security work at a Virginia nuclear powerplant, Luke accepted an offer in 2004 to work for Blackwater Security Consulting. Blackwater specializes in providing security and support to the military, Government agencies, law enforcement groups, and civilians operating in hostile regions. Luke wanted to get back to work in Iraq, and Blackwater would give him that opportunity.

While Luke was always full of stories, he was careful to focus on the good he was doing. He would rather talk about the good than the danger and destruction around him. His friend, Chuck Lawrence, had this to say about Luke's return to Iraq: "I talked to him just about every day. He loved his job and had no regrets. He never regretted his decision to go over there [to Iraq]. He was doing what he loved."

Luke's mother, Diana Spencer, agreed, saying that "he enjoyed his work. He was very focused, very patriotic, and felt he was protecting his country."

Luke's time at Blackwater whetted his appetite for more service in the military. He told his family in one of his last e-mails home that he wanted to become a Navy SEAL. His stepfather said that Luke "missed special operations work [and that] he had a warrior's heart and had to do what he loved."

Tragically, though, Luke would not get the chance to become a Navy SEAL. On April 21, 2005, he boarded a helicopter flight bound for Tikrit. He was going there to provide security detail for American diplomats. His helicopter was shot down by insurgents a few miles north of Baghdad. Luke and the 10 other civilian passengers and flight crew were killed.

A memorial service was held for Luke on Saturday, May 7, 2005, at the First United Methodist Church in his hometown of Conneaut. Pews were packed with mourners, from former schoolmates to friends, family, and his fellow Rangers. Atop the casket was an American flag and a flower arrangement reading "Ranger." All those closest to Luke agreed that this was certainly fitting.

His mother Diana tearfully recalled that a plaque that Luke received after his discharge from the Army Rangers summed up his character. It reads: "To a friend, a mentor, and the living embodiment of the Ranger creed." As Diana put it; "That says everything about Luke."

The service provided an opportunity for all of Luke's friends to reflect on how much he meant to them and how much he had taught them both through word and deed. Chuck Lawrence remembers his essential decency, saying that "anyone who came in contact with Luke was better off for it. I never met anyone more genuine." Childhood friend, C.J. Welty says that "Luke taught me [that] there is a lot to learn, and to do as much as you can in the short time [you have] here on Earth."

In observance of Arbor Day, the Conneaut Tree Commission hosted a tree planting ceremony at Malek Park Arboretum to honor local men and women serving in Iraq. A red oak tree was planted in Luke's memory. It serves as a symbol of life and strength. That is how Luke should be remembered—as a vital, happy young man.

In a beautiful letter to me, Luke's stepfather Eldridge wrote that "I am having a life celebration for Luke and the way he lived his life, where the good memories will far outweigh the oppressive grief."

My wife Fran and I keep all of Luke's family and friends in our prayers. Luke Petrik will never be forgotten.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, today in North Carolina, the Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, delivered remarks that announced her intention to create a commission to take a comprehensive look at postsecondary education in the United States. I am here to say that Secretary Spellings is on exactly the right track with her new commission. The idea is an excellent one and long overdue. While the United States has been conducting a lot of debates—many in this Chamber—about outsourcing jobs, we have been very successfully insourcing brain power. Insourcing brain power has been our secret weapon for job growth. It is the main reason we have 5 percent of the world's population and about one-third of the world's money. Our unrivaled system of colleges and universities, together with our national research laboratories, have been our magnet for attracting and keeping home the best minds in the world who have, in turn, helped provide the new jobs produced by science, who have, in turn, helped provide half the new jobs since World War II. The National Academy of Sciences estimates that one-half of our new jobs since World War II have come from advances in science and technology. This secret weapon for jobs' growth is at risk if we do not take several urgently needed steps. Taking a comprehensive look at the Federal role in higher education is a good first step. This should have happened years ago. In fact, my greatest regret, as Secretary of Education under the first President Bush, is that I did not volunteer to be the point person in higher education in the Federal Government. Almost every Federal agency regulates some aspect of higher education. Last year, the Federal Government, all