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Senate

The Senate met at 9:44 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM DEMINT, a Senator from the State of South Carolina.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Creator and Redeemer, we praise You today for Your goodness and for Your wonderful works to the children of humanity. You satisfy the longing soul and fill hungry spirits with goodness. Thank You for Your many blessings: for life and health, for grace and friendship, for praise and worship.

Equip our Senators for the challenges of this day. Empower them to seize the opportunities to make a difference in our Nation and the life of our world. May their best energies not be squandered in partisan politics. Instead, give each lawmaker the courage to understand what is right and the willingness to do it.

Give us all a faith that will discern the new things You are doing in our world.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JIM DEMINT led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 28, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM DEMINT, a Senator from the State of South Carolina, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. DEMINT thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. We are not yet in morning business.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for not to exceed 1 hour, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the minority leader or his designee, and the remaining 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, seeing no one from the minority here at the moment, I ask unanimous consent I be allowed to proceed for a few moments in majority time in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO ERMA ORA JAMES BYRD

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the King James version of the Bible tells us that shortly after the creation of man:

The Lord God said "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helpmate for him."

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam.

It continues that "he took one of his ribs . . . and . . . made he a woman."

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.

The verse concludes:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Mr. President, for almost 69 years, ROBERT BYRD and Erma Ora James Byrd have been one—since their marriage on May 29, 1937. And today I rise to offer my heartfelt condolences to the Senator from West Virginia, ROBERT BYRD, on the passing of his dear wife.

Senator BYRD has served for nearly 50 years in the Senate as our cornerstone—a reminder of this body's mission and duty. Sadly, the cornerstone of the Senate has lost the keystone of his life. Erma Ora James Byrd went home to be with her Creator on this Saturday past, at the age of 88.

Erma Byrd was born in Floyd County, VA, and moved to the coalfields of West Virginia as a child with her family. Her father was a coal miner and came to the State to work.

As a Kentuckian—another State of coal miners—I was always moved to hear Senator BYRD proudly declare that he had, in fact, married a coal miner's daughter.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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On the Byrds' 65th wedding anniversary in 2002, Senator BYRD said:

Erma and I are complete and whole, a total that is more than the sum of its parts. In my life, Erma Ora Byrd is the diamond.

As every schoolchild in West Virginia learns, coal, when placed under great pressure, becomes a diamond. So it is fitting that Senator BYRD has the coalfields to thank for bringing his beloved Erma to him.

The Byrds' marriage was a study of partnership, devotion, and teamwork. It was living proof of the deep bonds that grow between a loving husband and wife. My own parents were married for 50 years, so I have seen firsthand the strength of those bonds and know the heartache when they are broken—until the reunion.

And so we grieve with our friend for his loss. Our prayers are with him. But we also know West Virginia's great Senator will one day be rejoined with his beloved Mrs. Byrd.

May God bless our friend ROBERT BYRD and the Byrd family.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

I withhold that suggestion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

TRIBUTE TO MAGGIE INOUE AND ERMA ORA BYRD

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I join with my colleague from Kentucky in expressing my deep sense of sorrow, as well, over the passing of two members of our family. And I speak of both the wife of our colleague from Hawaii, Senator INOUE, who lost his beloved Maggie a week or so ago and, of course, the recent news we received over the weekend of the passing of Erma Ora Byrd. These are members of our family, in a sense.

I have known both Mrs. Byrd and Mrs. Inoue since I was a child. My father was a Member of this body and was elected, in fact, to the Senate on the same day ROBERT BYRD was, in 1958. So I have had the privilege of serving with Senator BYRD both indirectly and directly for these now more than 40 years. In fact, I have the unique privilege of being his seatmate in this body, something which I have enjoyed immensely over the past decade and a half that I have sat at this seat in the Senate next to the distinguished senior Senator from West Virginia.

I certainly remember Maggie Inoue. She was wonderful to my parents and was good to me over the years. To watch two of our colleagues about whom we care so deeply go through the tremendous suffering they are going through as a result of the loss of their life mates is something all of us—regardless of where we sit in this Chamber, to what party we belong, in what direction our ideological compass may lead us—we all have a deep sense of loss for these wonderful people.

DAN and Maggie Inoue were very close to my parents, as I mentioned.

She was born in 1924 and attended schools in Hawaii and then went on to receive degrees at the University of Hawaii and Columbia University and was highly respected in the area of speech pathology. She was a remarkable woman in her own right who could have had a very distinguished career independently of her husband.

She and DAN met in 1947, and as DAN INOUE likes to tell the story, on the second date he proposed marriage. Not one to delay at all, he had met the person he clearly decided was going to be his life mate. And for the next 57 years, they were just that.

They celebrated the birth of their son Kenny who was again a wonderful child and has done a remarkable job in his own right.

I will remember Maggie best for her grace and poise and I was saddened to hear of her passing after a long battle with cancer earlier this month.

I went out to Hawaii last week and attended Maggie's funeral along with Senator STEVENS and his wife Catherine. It was a long trip, and I know that DAN did not expect a large number of his colleagues to make that journey. It was not a hard trip to make. It would have been harder not to make it in my case, given the closeness of our families over the years. And for me I knew there was nowhere else I could be than being present with DAN and his family to celebrate the life of Maggie.

During the visitation period prior to the funeral service, I was deeply moved by watching literally a couple thousand people express their condolences to DAN, to his son Kenny, Kenny's wife, Jessica. Each expression was heartfelt. It was personal. These were relationships that were solidified over years of friendship with DAN INOUE, with his wife Maggie, and the constituents and friends of theirs from Hawaii.

I was also moved by the peacefulness of the funeral service, and most especially by the very touching and eloquent eulogy delivered by Maggie's longtime friend, Sumi McCabe.

I would like to close by offering my thoughts and prayers, once again, to DAN, to his son Kenny, and to his daughter-in-law Jessica.

As we mourn the loss of this wonderful woman, let us remember that her spirit will be with us and that her inspirational legacy will live on in the generations to come of her family.

So again, to our friend DAN, we want to express our deep sense of loss and our sense of solidarity with him.

Mr. President, to lose, just a few days later, of course, the wife of our great friend and leader, Senator BYRD, was a major blow as well. Certainly, the history of Erma Ora Byrd is well known to all of us.

As Senator MCCONNELL just pointed out, she was the daughter of a coal miner. She had been the life mate, for 69 years, of our colleague from West Virginia. It was clear to anyone who had the fortune of knowing them that they loved each other very deeply.

Erma Ora James was born in Floyd County, VA, in 1917. The daughter of a coal miner, as I just mentioned, her family moved to Raleigh County, WV, where she met ROBERT while attending the Mark Twain Grade School.

They were married when they were both 19 years of age in 1937. Shortly thereafter they began a loving family that has grown to two daughters, five grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

Even though she was content to remain out of Washington's limelight, Erma became quickly known and loved for her commonsense values and her devotion to her family.

Erma also became well respected for her advocacy on issues affecting children across West Virginia and, of course, our Nation as well. Two academic scholarship programs at Marshall University and West Virginia University, respectively, have been named in her honor as a result of her efforts.

Four years ago, at the couple's 65th wedding anniversary, Senator BYRD said of his wife:

Erma and I are complete and whole, a total that is more than the sum of its parts. In my life, Erma Ora Byrd is the diamond. She is a priceless treasure, a multifaceted woman of great insight and wisdom, of quiet humor and common sense. I wish that more people could know the joy I have had in finding one's soul mate early in life and then sharing that deep companionship over many happy years.

Mr. President, my thoughts and prayers, along with those of our colleagues, I know, are with Senator BYRD and his family in these hours. I wish to extend my sympathies to ROBERT; his daughters, Mona and Marjorie; their husbands, Mohammed and Jon; ROBERT and Erma's grandchildren, Erik, Darius, Fredrik, Mona, and Mary; and ROBERT and Erma's great-grandchildren, Caroline, Kathryn, Anna, Emma, Hannah, and Michael.

Knowing of Senator BYRD's love for poetry, I am reminded of a passage in Thomas Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," which happened to be my father's favorite poem. Gray's "Elegy" says in one of its stanzas:

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished)
a friend.

ROBERT gained a wonderful friend, obviously, and a companion—a life companion—in Erma. It is my hope that her spirit remains with us and will inspire all of us and future generations to come.

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I wish to take a minute to offer my sincerest condolences to Senator BYRD on the passing of his beloved wife Erma. In a love story that is both moving and inspiring to all people, ROBERT BYRD's grade school sweetheart became his lifelong best friend in a marriage that spanned almost seven decades. While this makes the loss that much more profound, I would imagine it makes the