

them are unknown to us, but our gratitude to all of them is no less real.

Women's opportunities continue to expand in South Dakota, in America, and throughout the world. They are leaders in South Dakota, taking on new roles every day in our communities. Cecelia Fire Thunder is one such woman. Cecelia is the first female president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. She has fought to improve the education of her tribe's children and the health of her tribe's community. This is not Cecelia's first role as a caregiver to her community. Before becoming president, she was a nurse and healthcare provider.

Yet even as we celebrate South Dakota's women of yesterday and today, we live in uncertain times for women. As we honor the women who have helped us throughout history and those who make our country a better place today, it is imperative that we keep our promises to them.

As the 200,000 active American women soldiers return home, we must keep our promise to them to give them access to the health care they need. Four million women are battered in their homes in this country every year. We must keep our promise to them to fully fund law enforcement and violence prevention programs under the Violence Against Women Act. More than 2,500 children will be born into poverty today alone in this country. We must keep our promise to their mothers that every child in every community in this country will receive a quality education. One in four Native American women live in poverty. We must keep our promise to them to make their communities stronger with programs that provide access to quality, affordable housing under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act.

And most importantly, when the women in our communities are vulnerable, we cannot abandon them. We cannot ignore their needs. When we know that the leading causes of death for women are heart disease and cancer—and the average fatality rates for South Dakotans with these diseases are higher than the national average fatality rates—we cannot cut Government support for research that will cure these deadly diseases as the current 2007 budget proposes. We as a community must stand by our promise to women to find a cure for these diseases.

This month we honor the women who protect our values in our homes, in our communities and overseas. This month we thank them for their sacrifices, their compassion, and their leadership. This month we renew our promises to them to continue building a safer, better, more just society for them, for their families and for all Americans.

IN RECOGNITION OF GERALD J. LEELING

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Gerald

"Gary" Leeling for receiving the Colonel Paul W. Arcari Meritorious Achievement Award from the Military Officers Association of America—MOAA—on March 18, 2006.

I have come to know Gary through his service as minority staff director of the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, of which I am ranking member. His responsibilities include recruiting and retention, separation and retirement, pay and benefits, personnel policies, military medical programs, and military officer nominations. Gary is highly deserving of this award for his strong staff work on numerous legislative initiatives affecting military people. Whether he is briefing me on pending nominations or changes to numerous defense programs, Gary does so in a professional and committed manner.

Before beginning his service in the Senate in December 1998, Gary was an Army Judge Advocate General's corps officer. During his 28 years of service in the Army, Mr. Leeling served as chief of the Administrative Law Division, Office of the Judge Advocate General of the Army; staff judge advocate for III Armored Corps, Fort Hood, TX; faculty, Industrial College of the Armed Forces; staff judge advocate for 2nd Armored Division, Fort Hood, TX; and deputy staff judge advocate for VII Corps, Stuttgart, West Germany.

Gary received a bachelor of science degree from South Dakota State University and a juris doctorate from the University of South Dakota. He is a graduate of the Judge Advocate General's Graduate Course, the Army Command and General Staff College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

I consider Gary a tremendous asset that the Senate Armed Services Committee is lucky to have, and I commend Gary on his accomplishments and thank him for his contributions to our country's servicemembers.

PASSING OF RAY MEYER

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise today with sadness to note the passing of a college basketball icon, Ray Meyer, the longtime coach of the DePaul University Blue Demons. Mr. Meyer died on March 17 of congestive heart failure at age 92. Although we mourn his passing, I choose to celebrate the memory of a good and decent man and a quintessential Chicagoan.

Ray Meyer had a hardscrabble upbringing on the West Side of Chicago the youngest in a family of seven boys and three girls. His dad ran a wholesale candy business but died when young Ray was only 13. Finding an outlet in competitive sports—baseball, basketball, football, and wrestling—Ray Meyer started to make a name for himself at St. Agatha's Grade School, Quigley Preparatory Seminary, and St. Patrick's Academy.

Coach Ray's earliest mentoring skills led him to the love of his life—Mar-

garet Mary Delaney—when a local priest cajoled Ray into assisting him with the St. Agatha's parish girls team. The "Coach and Marge" had a lifelong love affair in a marriage of 46 years that ended only with Marge's death in 1985 at age 72.

Earning a scholarship to Notre Dame under coach George Keogan, Ray Meyer had a distinguished collegiate career. He graduated on the honor roll with classmates including future Notre Dame president Theodore Hesburgh and future executive vice president Edmund Joyce. Graduating in 1938, Ray was the proud recipient of Notre Dame's Byron V. Kanaley Award for lettermen demonstrating the highest in academic achievement and leadership.

Following graduation, Meyer worked several jobs unrelated to his love of sports. Shortly after his marriage, Ray was offered the job of basketball coach at Joliet Catholic high school, but he refused when the school fell \$100 short of his requirement for an \$1,900 annual salary. But fate intervened when his former Notre Dame coach George Keogan suffered a heart attack and Ray was hired to fill in for the remainder of the 1940–41 season, staying on as an assistant to Keogan until 1942 when DePaul University came calling.

Early in his career, Coach Meyer was blessed with a bespectacled, gangly 6-foot-10-inch center named George Mikan. Mikan, who later was named the outstanding player of the first half of the 20th century, was awkward and inexperienced. Under Ray Meyer's tutelage and his own work ethic, George Mikan turned into a dominating force as one of the first true big men to excel at the college level.

In 1943, Mikan and his DePaul mates played in the 1943 NCAA tournament against the Georgetown Hoyas and a freshman reserve named Henry Hyde the same Henry Hyde who is just now serving his final term in the other body as a distinguished member of Congress from Illinois. In 1945, the Mikan-led Blue Demons won the National Invitational Tournament, which at the time was more prestigious than the NCAA tourney.

Coming to DePaul in 1942, Coach Ray stayed 42 years on the sidelines and another 13 as the colorful radio broadcaster for the games of the school he loved, then coached by his former player and son, Joey Meyer. Ray Meyer's list of coaching accomplishments is truly impressive: 724 victories at 1 school; 55 years of attending all of DePaul's 1,467 games; 37 winning seasons; an NIT title in 1945; NCAA Final Four teams in 1943 and 1979; and membership in the Basketball Hall of Fame. DePaul University recognized the role of Coach and his wife as ambassadors in its expansion to the largest Catholic University in the United States. DePaul named in its campus Fitness and Recreation Center after the coach and the floor at its home court, Allstate Arena, as the "Ray and Marge Meyer Court."

Coach Meyer was not only good, he was resourceful. For many years, his recruiting budget was minimal. Enticing promising players to come to a school in the shadow of the North Side "L" was difficult. Finding housing for players near a campus with little student housing at that time was also a challenge. Sometimes, the players were fed from the Meyer kitchen or some extra meal tickets at the Roma on the corner of Sheffield and Webster, where they could enjoy a great Italian beef sandwich. But Coach was imaginative and diligent. He used both qualities to establish and operate a basketball camp in Three Lakes, WI, for 55 summers.

Ray Meyer left an impact on all of his players. He had some great ones Mikan, Jim Lamkin, Howie Carl, Dave Corzine, Mark Aguirre, Rod Strickland, Terry Cummings, and Dallas Comegys, among others. But he had an incalculable impact on his school, his family and friends, Chicago, the Midwest and the Nation. Hall of Fame coach and native Chicagoan, Mike Krzyzewski, may have said it best:

Coach Meyer casts a large shadow on the game of college basketball. . . . He truly loved the game and the kids he coached. It was so evident. In each game that he coached and each game that he announced, I love him. He served as a great example of what a coach should be."

To his children sons Tom, Joey, Bob and daughters Barbara and Pat and his 18 grandchildren, I send my most heartfelt condolences, and I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the life and memory of a wonderful human being, Coach Ray Meyer.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

IN MEMORY OF BUCK OWENS

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today, I rise to honor the memory of the late Buck Owens, the Country Music Hall of Fame honoree who introduced a uniquely California sound to country music. Mr. Owens, a long time Bakersfield resident, passed away at his home on March 25, 2006. He was 76 years old.

Alvis Edgar Owens, Jr. was born in Sherman, TX, in 1932. At an early age, he nicknamed himself, "Buck," after a mule on the family farm. Seeking better fortune during the Great Depression, the Owens family moved west in 1937, settling in Mesa, AZ.

An avid music fan, Buck learned to play the guitar in his early teens. By his late teens, he was already a regular on local radio stations and was playing shows in honky tonks and bars around Phoenix. A precocious and determined young man, it was apparent to many that Buck was a prodigiously talented musician who was destined for great success.

Buck's many accomplishments amassed over a five-decade recording and performing career have rightfully cemented his status as one of the

greatest country-western entertainers ever. He was truly a trailblazer whose trademark stinging electric guitar and rhythm sound revolutionized country music. Buck's 21 country singles from 1963 to 1988 were a testament to his longevity and staying power. Buck's music was universally celebrated and embraced, as evidence by the Beatles' cover of his song, "Act Naturally" in 1965. The consummate entertainer, Buck's iconic television entertainment show, "Hee Haw" enjoyed a remarkable 25 year run on the airwaves.

I was delighted to have met Buck back in 1997 at his Crystal Palace in Bakersfield. He was kind and generous of spirit, as when I was invited to present one of his special red, white, and blue guitars to a promising music student named William Villatoro. I still vividly remember how the young man was deeply moved and inspired by his generous gesture. I will certainly remember Buck Owens as a man of great compassion who possessed a profound love for his country. Although he is no longer with us, I take great comfort in knowing that Buck Owens was not only able to be a shining light in the life of a young man from Bakersfield, but also to the millions of others who admired his musical gifts and were touched by his humanity.

Buck Owens has left behind a legacy of artistry and boundless love for his adopted hometown of Bakersfield and California's Central Valley. He will be dearly missed.

Buck Owens is survived by his three sons, Buddy Alan, Michael, and Johnny.●

HONORING JAZZ LEGEND AND COLORADAN DIANNE REEVES

• Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise to call attention to one of the world's most recognized jazz vocalists who also happens to call Denver home—Dianne Reeves.

Earlier this year, Dianne won a Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album, this time for her work on the soundtrack of the Best Picture-nominee, "Good Night, and Good Luck." The album is filled with standards like "Straighten Up and Fly Right," and "Too Close for Comfort."

Dianne grew up in Denver where she was raised by her grandmother, taking piano lessons before discovering her love of singing. She got her start in the jazz band at Denver's George Washington High School when she was discovered by trumpeter Clark Terry while performing with the band at the National Association of Jazz Educators Conference in Chicago. She went on to tour with Harry Belafonte while still in her twenties before being signed to the legendary Blue Note record label in 1987. Just 4 years ago, the world enjoyed her performance at the closing ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, UT, that critics called "spellbinding."

This Grammy award was not Dianne's first. Rather, it was her

fourth in six nominations. Previously, she won the Best Jazz Vocal award 3 years in a row, an unprecedented feat for an artist in any vocal category. She has joined with fellow jazz giants like Wynton Marsalis, recorded with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, performed with the Berlin Philharmonic, and was the first vocalist to perform at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Dianne has been recognized around the world for her outstanding artistic accomplishments and contributions, and we in Colorado are proud that she still calls our State "home."●

PIEDMONT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, DULUTH, MINNESOTA

• Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Piedmont Elementary School, in Duluth, MN, which recently earned an Award for Excellence in Education for its exceptional and innovative achievements in educating children.

Piedmont School is truly a model of educational success. The school has 220 pupils in kindergarten through grade 5 and provides school readiness services for 30 preschool children.

One program unique to Piedmont Elementary is its reverse-mainstreaming program, which makes it possible for kindergarteners to spend time in a special education classroom for kindergarten children with special needs. The experience helps these children to interact better with one another and to appreciate the challenges that some children must meet every day.

The school prides itself on its efforts to ensure that everyone will feel valued at Piedmont and that everyone—pupils, staff, parents, grandparents, and visitors—will know that they are always welcome. In keeping with this cordial theme, each child arriving at Piedmont for the first time receives the red-carpet treatment: A red carpet of construction paper, which is signed by all the children currently enrolled, is laid down as part of the welcoming ceremony.

Also along the lines of good citizenship, each month, a new character trait is taught in the classrooms and at monthly assemblies, focusing on respect, responsibility, compassion, citizenship, fairness, and honesty.

Much of the credit for Piedmont School's success belongs to its principal, Kris Teberg, and her dedicated teachers. The children and staff at Piedmont School understand that, in order to be successful, a school must go beyond achieving academic success; it must also provide a nurturing environment where students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for success throughout life. All of the faculty, staff, and children at Piedmont School should be very proud of their accomplishments.

I congratulate Piedmont Elementary School in Duluth for winning the Award for Excellence in Education and